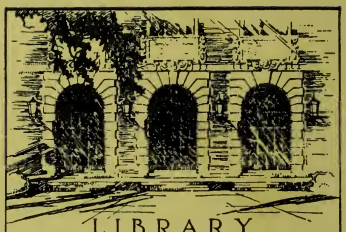
MISS BIDDY FROBISHER

A SALT WATER STORY

BY

THE AUTHOR OF

MARY POWELL



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A SALT-WATER STORY

BY

THE AUTHOR OF 'MARY POWELL.'

'Full fathom five thy father lies;
Of his bones are corals made;
Those are pearls that were his eyes:
Nothing of him that doth fade
But doth suffer a sea change,
Into something rich and strange.'

'Come unto these yellow sands,
And then take hands: . . .
Foot it featly here and there;
And, sweet sprites, the burthen bear.'

THE TEMPEST.

LONDON
SAMPSON LOW, SON, AND MARSTON
MILTON HOUSE, LUDGATE HILL
1866.

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EDINBURGH : T. CONSTABLE,
PRINTER TO THE QUEEN, AND TO THE UNIVERSITY

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CHAPTER I.

DEC 30 1954 MARSHALL

A BRIGHT, sparkling afternoon, with a fine, fresh breeze such as sailors love, brought the 'Lively Peggy' briskly into the little harbour of Hardsand. Two men and a boy appeared to be all the crew. On deck, with a spy-glass in her hand, stood a buxom, middle-aged female, attired in a close-fitting blue cloth coat with large white buttons. A snow-white collar of stitched linen contrasted well with the black silk handkerchief round her throat; a round black hat, with ample but not immoderate brim, was tied firmly on by broad black strings. Laced leather boots and beaver gloves completed her equipment, which was excellently adapted for a small merchant vessel.

As for her face, it was somewhat too massive to be handsome, and her healthy

complexion was too tanned and freckled to be fair; but there was a bright rose-tint on her cheeks, that deepened into carmine on her lips. Furthermore, her mouth, which boasted white even teeth, was beautified when she smiled by a dimple. Her dark chestnut hair was cropped short, almost like a boy's, but played in curls over her forehead, which her hat had protected from sunburn. Her dark grey eye had wonderful and varying expression, and could be soft, kindly, and humorous; but it usually bespoke great determination.

Such was Miss Biddy Frobisher, who now, in a quick, peremptory voice, cried,—

'Luff, sir, luff!'

The eldest seaman made some alteration in the tackling, and presently approached Miss Biddy, respectfully raising his hat.

'Well, Beale, what is it?'

'If I might make so bold, Miss—'

'Well, out with it—'

'Instead of saying "Luff, sir, luff—"'

'I ought to have said, "Will you be so good as to move the ship's head a little more to the left-hand side, if you please!" Stuff and nonsense. Don't be so fond of preaching, Beale.'

'No, Miss; only—'

'I don't want any onlys. You understood what I wanted well enough, or you wouldn't have done it. And I'll tell you what, Beale, I've something to say to *you* too before we get into port. Come close to me, there's no need for Coles and Bob to hear every word I say. That will do; now I need not shout. Beale, you sailed with my father a good many years. If you don't want to sail with me, I can get some one else.'

'Goodness gracious, Miss Biddy, what ever should make you go for to say such a thing? Have I been swearing? Have I been spitting? Have I been disobedient? Many and many's the time I've carried you in these arms—'

'Yes, yes, I know all that—'

'And just because I said you didn't ought to say luff—'

'Tell me in one word, Beale, would you have told my father he didn't ought to do anything?'

'Well, no; because, you see, he didn't need to be told—'

'No, that was not the reason. It was because he was your master, and you were

his servant; and now you are my servant, or you are nothing to me.'

'I 'm sure, Miss, I 'm quite agreeable.'

'No, that 's the very thing you are not. You are not and cannot be agreeable to me if you don't do what I wish. Now, if I say luff, when I mean something else, just you do it! and don't go exposing any little inadvertence—'

'Exposing of you? Why, I 'd sooner—'

'Hush, don't speak so loud, nor throw your arm about so. People have eyes as well as ears. If there are words that I use in a sense of my own that isn't your sense, just make a list of them, and put your words against them, and I 'll use yours instead.'

'Bless your heart, Miss—'

'Give it me privately, I say, and don't go blabbing to Coles.'

'If I ever did such a mean thing, may I—'

'No swearing, or you are paid off to-night! I use expressions that you don't like sometimes, and you use expressions that I don't like very often. This shall be a God-fearing vessel, Beale. There was many a wrong word spoken on board the "Betsy;" and the "Betsy" went down.'

'Well, the old cap'n *did* rap out an oath pretty oft—'

'Don't speak ill of the dead. My father is gone to his account; and oh that I may square for him the account he left behind him in this world!'

'You're a dutiful daughter, Miss Biddy, that we all know; and if you don't carry your point, which I 'm afeard you never will, why, it 's not to be expectivated; and you're no ways answerable for your father's debts.'

'That's my affair. What I say is, that this is to be a God-fearing vessel, otherwise I cannot expect a blessing on my deed. See what a prosperous trip we have made! That French brig was lost on the very spot we sailed over. Let us bear our mercies in mind.'

Beale touched his hat and went aft, while Miss Biddy thoughtfully paced the little deck, with her hands in her coat pockets, and her spy-glass tucked under her arm.

'There are the girls!' she presently exclaimed joyfully.

'Ay, ay, sir,' responded Beale.

'He calls me sir,' thought she, 'but I'll let it pass. With all his queer ways he 's a true heart.'

They ran alongside the quay, and a custom-house officer came on board. After a short dialogue with him, Miss Biddy stepped on shore, carrying a roll of ships' papers. Two young girls hastily ran up to her and kissed her. Many persons were standing about, who had watched the 'Lively Peggy' come in, and as Miss Biddy walked briskly along the pier, with a sister on each side, she exchanged many a cheerful greeting.

'Safe home, you see!' she cried to one. 'A prosperous trip!' to another. 'How do you do, Tom? Are you better? How are you, Captain Spinks? I must have a talk with you shortly.' 'Mrs. Graves, Bob has been a very good boy: he will soon be with you.'

'I am so glad you are come home, Biddy,' said her dark-eyed sister Bell. 'How freckled you are!'

'Take care *you* don't get freckled, Bell. It is of more importance at your age than mine. How is Mrs. Bertie? Have you seen much of her?'

'O yes; I have been there every day, hearing Perry his lessons. Charles is come home from Steephollow.'

At this instant a middle-aged maid-servant,

with her cap half blown off, came rushing down the quay, to give her mistress a breathless welcome, having done which, and received a cordial greeting, she fell into the rear. Having delivered her papers to the authorities, Miss Biddy rejoined her sisters; and the little group proceeded to a white wooden house with red-tiled roof and bright green shutters, which stood a little apart from the street, with a steep narrow garden before it. They passed through the white gate and up the pebbled walk flanked by gay flower-beds, to the wide-open door of the house, which had been deserted by all but the cat.

'Well, old Malkin, how are you?' said Miss Biddy, as the cat rose and rubbed itself against her dress by way of greeting. Then taking it up in her arms, she looked about her with great satisfaction. The parlour into which the door opened was low and square. The wainscot and raftered ceiling were painted white; the window-seat was full of scarlet geraniums. There was an old bureau, an old mahogany sideboard, an oval table covered with green baize, a large chintz-covered easy-chair, several mahogany ones with horsehair seats, and, against the

wall, a grim old portrait of a hard-featured naval commander.

Soon they were sitting down to a sociable tea; and the cabin-boy brought up Miss Biddy's bag and a large basket of fruit.

'See what pears and apples Guernsey boasts!' said Miss Biddy. 'Shouldn't you like to go there?'

'Not to live there,' said Hetty. 'So much as you are away from us, we are better among our friends.'

'Well, I think so too, Hetty.'

'Take me with you next trip, Biddy!' said Bell.

'No; it wouldn't do for you. You couldn't rough it as I do. I should amazingly like to go to Lisbon.'

'To Lisbon?' exclaimed they both. 'O don't!'

Miss Biddy laughed merrily, and said, 'Why not?'

'You 'll be out of your soundings. Father never went to Lisbon.'

'That 's no reason.'

'But Beale never went to Lisbon,' said Hetty, earnestly, 'and that *is* a reason. Oh, Biddy, if you should be lost, where are we?'

'Fiddlesticks! It will do Beale good to be out of his soundings, and take the conceit out of him.'

'Of course you would have a pilot,' said Bell. 'But you don't understand Portuguese. I don't like to think of it, Biddy.'

'Don't, then. Perhaps it may not come to anything.'

'And this has really been a good trip?'

'Famous; the cargo was so well chosen. Madame Roland was a capital adviser. She knew what was wanted in the market. I have returned with a cargo of fruit.'

'What shall you do with it?'

'Run up to London to-morrow.'

'Going again so soon?'

'Fruit won't bear delay. No more tea, thank you, Bell. I want to settle my accounts.'

'Oh, well, if you want a quiet room, I suppose I may as well water the garden.'

'Yes, do; and I will look out at you from time to time. How goes on music, Bell?'

'Oh, pretty well. I practise every day on Mrs. Bertie's piano; only it is a disadvantage not to have one to practise on at home.'

'Instead of saying that, think what an ad-

vantage it is to have one to practise on at Mrs. Bertie's. And French ?'

'I read some French every day. You know that is all I can do.'

'You would soon learn to patter away at it in Guernsey.'

And then followed Guernsey anecdotes, which amused them till Miss Biddy sat down to her desk, and Bell went to water her flowers.

CHAPTER II.

MISS BIDDY was not destined to settle her accounts without interruption; for scarcely had she addressed herself to her task, when she was diverted from it by the entrance of her friend Mrs. Bertie, a widow lady of pleasing demeanour, whose mourning bore the air of faded gentility.

'I am so much obliged to you,' said Miss Biddy cordially, 'for keeping your eye on the girls in my absence. I did not expect any harm to befall them, but did not like to leave them without some one to look to in case of need.'

'My charge was quite a sinecure,' said Mrs. Bertie. 'Bell came daily to practise and to hear Perry say his lessons, but I saw very little of Hetty, who had generally fruit to gather, or a pudding to make, or some little

employment that amused her. I was always glad to see her, but let her come or stay away as she liked. They often brought their work in the evening, and sometimes we read a little, but oftener talked. The more I see of Bell the more I like her. And how pretty she grows!'

'Hush, she will hear you—she is just outside, tying up the pinks. There's your Charles helping her. Why did he not come in?'

'Charles is rather shy, and cannot bear paying a visit, even to you.'

'Charles looks anything but shy at this moment,' said Miss Biddy, gazing keenly at the unconscious youth. 'Do look at him and Bell!'

'He is making his first attempt at easy compliment, I should think,' said Mrs. Bertie, laughing quietly.

'Pretty well for a first attempt. See, he wants to put flowers in her hair, and she draws back her head. Oh, you rogue!' shaking her head at him, as he happened to look towards the house. Very sheepishly he sauntered with his hands in his pockets towards a square bed of onions, which he attentively contemplated.

'Charles, you're doing nothing,' cried Miss Biddy to him in her clear, full-toned voice. 'Can't you look after the slugs?'

He made a wry face, but pretended to do so for a minute or two, while she was watching him.

'I go to London to-morrow,' said Miss Biddy. 'I want to settle my business matters; and I have brought over a cargo of fruit, which is perishable.'

'What a woman of business you are!'

'Ah, no,' said she ruefully. 'I was just reviewing my profits and losses as you came in, and though I have had some very encouraging successes, I have also had some very heavy losses. Men are so hard upon women, and take such advantage of them! They know we are naturally quick-witted, and they keep us in the dark as much as they can. However, I was not overreached by Monsieur Guillot, though within an inch of it. I had a fit of sneezing just as I was going to close with him, and in that moment a third person came in and said, 'Why, how is it, Mons. Guillot, that you are doing so and so?' While they were talking I walked out, made inquiries, returned to make a fresh bargain with him, and got him to thank me too!

Instead of holding me cheap, he respected me as a woman of the world. Perhaps I shall become one at last, but it is against the grain.'

'How long shall you remain in London?'

'Not more than twenty-four hours, I hope.'

'Where shall you sleep?'

'Well, my father used to put up at a very respectable place somewhere near St. Paul's, and I want to go to Covent Garden.'

'St. Paul's is a good way from Covent Garden,' said Mrs. Bertie; 'and I don't think it would be a very nice place for you.'

'St. Paul's, Covent Garden!' said Miss Biddy emphatically; as much as to say, 'I know something of London!'

'Ah, that's another St. Paul's!' said Mrs. Bertie; 'there are many St. Pauls' in London. But I can direct you to some very nice quiet people, where I went once with poor Mr. Bertie—'

Here the doorway was darkened by the heavy square-built form of an elderly man in a blue coat with metal buttons. He had a wooden leg.

'Oh, Captain Spinks, how do you do?'

said Miss Biddy, rising to meet him. 'Well, I have not gone to the bottom, you see.'

Captain Spinks, who was a retired smuggler, placed himself deliberately in the arm-chair that she set for him, and said oracularly,

> '"There 's a sweet little cherub sits perch'd up aloft,
> To keep watch for the life of poor Jack."

—So it was in my day, mum, and so it is in yours. Many a time have I gone out of harbour in an old tub that wasn't sea-worthy, and many a time have I got back. There 's many a sailor that don't go to the bottom; and if so, why not a sailoress? I watched you when you put to sea, and I remarked to a friend, "That woman will come back. There 's that about her that . . . that woman will come back." So, when I say so again, perhaps you 'll believe me.'

'Ay; or if I don't come back, you won't know whether I believed in you or not. I believe in Providence, Captain Spinks.'

'That 's what I said in the words of the poet,' said Captain Spinks, 'who clothed the idea in expressions superior to mine. Well, and how did my old friend Jack Beale get on? He 's a brick, if ever there was one.'

'Beale got on very well, as he always

does, in spite of one or two inveterate faults—'

'Ay, ay, mum, what may they be?'

'Oh, I 'm not going to complain of him to others; but he has a nasty habit of using improper expressions, and spitting in improper places.'

'Oh, oh, if it 's nothin' agin his seamanship, we must excuse him, mum; we *must* excuse him! I don't hold him up for a lady's man—'

'No, I should think not,' said Miss Biddy, laughing.

'But for a man as knows how to handle a vessel; why, brush my wig! (and I hope that 's not swearing) he 's—Hem! talk of a person and he appears.'

For there was Beale, demurely looking in at the door, with a box under his arm.

'I knew this held summat for the young ladies, Miss,' said he, touching his hat, 'so I thought I 'd just step up with it myself.'

'Thank you kindly, Beale. Wait to have a glass of something. What would you like? a glass of wine or some toddy?'

'Thank 'ee, Miss, since you 're so obliging, I 'll be tasting the wine while the young ladies mixes the toddy.'

'Who's left on board, Beale, with the custom-house officer?'

'Coles, Miss; he came back half-an-hour ago, and brought a newspaper on board to read.'

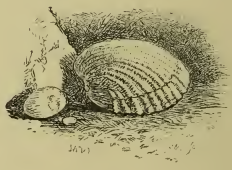
'Here's your wine, Beale. We are going to have prayers presently, and if you like to wait, you shall have a glass of toddy afterwards.'

Here Captain Spinks, who had rather been hoping the toddy would come round, suddenly became afraid that the evening air would increase his asthma; and, producing a large Bandana handkerchief, began to fold and tie it round his neck. Mrs. Bertie remembered it was time for her to send Perry to bed, and only outstayed Captain Spinks to give Miss Biddy the direction to the quiet lodging. Charles was summoned from his flirtation among the pinks to accompany his mother home, and Miss Biddy called her little household together half an hour earlier than usual, partly on Beale's account, and partly because she was very tired.

Said Beale to his shipmate afterwards—

'—And, Coles, there were two candlesticks as bright as gold on the table. And Miss

Biddy opened the biggest Bible I ever seen out of church, and read beautiful about a storm at sea, and the Saviour asleep on a pillow : and her voice was so loud and so clear and so grand, that it made my flesh creep And we all down on our knees, and she prayed beautiful, and gave wonderful thanks. After that, Miss Bell mixed the toddy ; and, Coles, you may say what you like, but 'twas the stiffest glass I ever had in all my born days. Shouldn't I like another !'



CHAPTER III.

IT was universally known in Hardsand that Miss Biddy had returned from a prosperous trip, and therefore she met on every hand with smiles and gratulations; 'for so long as thou doest good unto thyself, men will speak well of thee.'

Time had been, when her chartering a vessel and sailing in it herself had been spoken of with contemptuous pity or open ridicule. Her first trip had been a failure, and the remarks that were made on it reached her ears and filled her heart with bitterness.

Her father had been a sailor of the old school — hard-headed, hard-fisted, and somewhat hard-hearted. His early life had been hard; and when he came into a little money he bought a share in a trader, then got on to two shares, then to three. His partner died,

and he married his partner's widow, who became the mother of Biddy. They used to have altercations sometimes, and Biddy, who loved them both, was not always happy. At length her mother died, leaving her little property settled on Biddy. After several years, Mr. Frobisher married again. This was a trial to his daughter, who had supposed she should be his housekeeper for life; but her excellent nature was never more fully shown than in the friendliness with which she welcomed her step-mother to the home in which she was thenceforth to take a second place. Her young step-sisters found a second mother in her when they lost their own.

Before Miss Biddy started for London, she went down to the quay to take a farewell look at the 'Lively Peggy,' and give some parting directions. Captain Spinks and Coles were standing beside it with their backs to her in such deep confabulation that when she spoke Coles started as if he had been shot. However, Captain Spinks was not such a novice as to appear startled at anything; and, therefore, while Coles fell back several paces, and appeared intently engaged in doing something to a rope, the

old smuggler, just as if he had had Biddy in his eye ever since she set foot on the quay, went on with—

'And so, as I was saying, Miss Biddy, whom, by-the-by, I wish a good morning, which there's no need to wish you, for there never was finer weather, with a fine, stiff breeze coming right from the north. You'll have no rain, mum, between this and Lon'on, or my name's not Spinks.'

'But what were you saying to Coles?'

'About the brig, in course. Admiring of her, mum, as I always do whenever I see her, as well as the lady that's her sailing-master—I was saying to your ship's carpenter—'

'Coles is no ship's carpenter, though he can use a hammer and nail: you must not give him such fine names, Captain Spinks, for he's too heady already; and what between Beale and him, it's as much as I can do, sometimes, to hold my own.'

''Tis the nature of the masculine creation, mum. Adam, you see, came aboard the earth afore Madam, and so his sons have always done their best or worst to keep the upper hand. I dare say, mum, you've realized a pretty sum by this trip?'

'That's as may be. I haven't sold my cargo yet; and if my leather purse were stuffed with gold, it would only go a little way towards what I want—'

'But this vessel, mum, is now in such first-rate condition that, with common care and luck, you'll have all profit and no loss from this time forth—'

'I hope with all my heart it may be so; but it is in wiser hands than mine.'

'Where are those hands, mum, if I may be so bold?'

'Fie, Captain Spinks, do you never read your Bible?'

At this instant a little warm fat hand was slipped into her own, familiarly closing on her fingers; and looking downward she saw without much surprise, and certainly with anything but dissatisfaction, a very engaging-looking little boy of seven years old, whose dress was neither of the upper nor lower rank, but ingeniously and economically contrived, with very little regard to the fashion. His looks owed nothing to his apparel, nor did they need any adjunct, for his lovely golden-brown hair, speaking blue eyes, and radiant face, would have made him a cherub even in rags.

'May I go on board with you?' said he, coaxingly.

'Yes, Perry, you may,' and she smilingly stooped down and kissed him. 'Have you been a good boy while I was away?'

'Yes—no—not very good, mamma says. My lessons were such a plague. I wish I needn't learn any.'

'Oh, but everybody must learn lessons!'

'Not sailors?'

'Yes, sailors.' And though she had no more time to bestow in talking to him, she held fast by his hand while she gave her directions to Beale, and took him with her wherever she went. The little boy, whose name was Peregrine, though he was called Perry, was in a silent rapture of happiness. He was very fond of the sea, of ships, and of sailors; the greatest object of his desires was to go a voyage, but he had never yet been out of sight of land. He picked up and hoarded, however, every scrap of nautical phraseology and information that was within his reach, and being a very coaxing little fellow, he made friends with almost every sailor and fisherman in the place. To them his tongue would run nineteen to the dozen, and his frequent 'What's that?'

'what is it for?' 'how do you do it?' 'why do you do it?' 'could *I* do it?' procured him many a smiling explanation. Knowledge of the sort he loved he could accumulate and store away with curious aptitude, but for ordinary book-learning Master Peregrine Bertie had a lamentable disrelish. Many were the tears that smeared the dogs-eared leaves of his grammar, which was copiously illustrated with original designs of brigs, schooners, and sailors. In his pockets were always to be found samples of small cordage, tied with sailor's knots, or professionally coiled, along with marine specimens (often alive), and a toy compass which he knew how to box. In fact, the boy was born for a sailor, though his mother did not know of it, nor intend him to be one.

When Miss Biddy quitted the brig, this endearing little fellow trotted beside her all up the quay, having added to his possessions sundry little treasures which Beale, knowing his tastes, and secretly doating on him, had stored away for him on purpose, in the pockets of his capacious trousers.

'Wasn't it good of Mr. Beale to give me this—and these—and this?' said he, exhibiting his spoils to Miss Biddy with delight.

'Why, what can you do with them?' said she, amused; 'I call it a lot of rubbish.'

'Rubbish!' said Peregrine, amazed; 'why, they're the very things I want for my brig. Only look at these blocks!'

'Oh, so you're going to put to sea, are you?'

'I wish I were. Oh, Miss Biddy, *do* take me with you next time! *Do* ask mamma.'

'I'm afraid it would be of no use, Perry.'

'O yes, she'd mind *you*. Now do, Miss Biddy! I won't be the least trouble. Should you mind having me?'

'No, I should like it very much; but I'm certain your mamma would say no.'

'Oh, just try her! just try!'

To change the subject, she said, 'Here comes Mr. Craikie.'

'I don't like Mr. Craikie,' said Peregrine, 'he always looks so like a wolf.'

'Hush—.'

'Well, but doesn't he? Do *you* like him?'

'Yes, to be sure;' which was not the truth. Peregrine looked at her, in amaze that any one could make such an assertion; but, returning to the charge, said,—

'If I am very good indeed, and don't get one black mark, will you take me?'

'Perhaps I may,' said she absently, and little thinking how her words would be bottled up. In fact, her mind was occupied by Mr. Craikie, whom she at once disliked, distrusted, and yet wished to conciliate. Mr. Craikie was a wine and spirit merchant, a monied man, and a notable character in the little borough. He was a low-party man, and most of the burghers were opposed to Government; he was suspected of secret dealings with the smugglers, but nothing had ever been proved against him; nobody had much opinion of his moral character, and it was certain that he had a hard, selfish nature. Unfortunately, he was one of the late Mr. Frobisher's creditors, and Biddy longed to pay off scores with him sooner than with any other, because he seemed to hold a power over her. True, she was not bound to reimburse him, but she knew that he knew she was trying to do so, and that he scoffed at what he held to be the futile attempt. Outwardly, and to her face, however, he was all politeness, for he admired her handsome sister Bell. Bell would sooner keep a day-school like Mrs. Bertie than marry Mr. Craikie; but he had given her no opportunity as yet of telling him so, and Biddy

had begged her with some anxiety not to precipitate an explanation and estrangement.

He now approached Miss Biddy with an unpleasant smile upon his face, while little Peregrine held her hand tight, and thought he looked more wolfish than ever.

'His teeth are just like tusks,' said he, as they pursued their way up the quay after parting from him; 'and I think he is a little humpbacked.'

'Nonsense, Perry; you must not be satirical.'

'What is satirical?'

'Making unpleasant remarks.'

'Oh, then I won't.' For Peregrine was aiming just now at universal perfection; thinking, in his simplicity, that his reward was to be a trip in the 'Lively Peggy.'

'If Charles, now, were as fond of the sea as you are, Perry,' said Miss Biddy, 'there would be something to say for it.'

'Oh, Charles can't bear the sea,' said Peregrine; 'he says it always makes him sick; and I think he 's a little afraid.'

'Afraid! pooh, he wouldn't be such a coward.'

'He oughtn't to be; but I think he is. Charley 's not fond of the sea, but I know

what he's fond of' (confidentially lowering his voice)—

'Of what? Let me hear.'

'Two things. Books, for one.'

'Yes, he sets you a good example in that. What is the other?'

'Bell. Miss Bell.'

'My sister Bell?'

'Yes; I think he likes her very much. I hope they'll marry some day.'

'Marrying is not a thing to be talked about,' said Miss Biddy with decision. 'Recollect that, Peregrine.'

He looked rather alarmed, and said, 'Yes, I will. So, please don't call me so again.'

'Call you what?'

'Peregrine. Mamma never does so except when she's angry. She says my name's too fine for use.'

'It is a grand and noble name, and you must try to act up to it.'

It may be thought that Miss Biddy was frittering away her time this busy morning; but it was not yet eight o'clock, the hour at which the Hardsand coach started. Bell and Hetty, Charles and Perry, saw her off; and she found her travelling companions were a farmer and his wife, with whom she soon entered into conversation.

CHAPTER IV.

'A FINE set of blooming young people, madam,' said the farmer's wife to Miss Biddy. 'You 're proud of 'em, I dare say.'

'Well,' said she, smiling, 'I 've no right to be proud of the boys, for they 're no relations of mine; but I 'm fond, if not proud, of my sisters.'

'A handsome lass the tallest, madam,' struck in the farmer, 'that will some day make some honest man's heart ache, I 'll warrant.'

In fact, Bell was doing something like it as he spoke. When they turned homewards, after seeing the coach off, she said, 'Now, Perry, a race for lessons,' and began running.

'Ah, I'd rather race for anything else,' said Peregrine; 'but never mind,' and he began running too; till they were both brought to a pause by Charles calling after them.

'What's the matter?' said Bell, looking back.

He made no answer till he had come up with her, without quickening his pace, and then said, 'What's the good of being in such a monstrous hurry to get in-doors? We're very well here, and Perry does not want to be at his tasks.'

'That's just it, Charley. Hurra!' cried Peregrine, throwing up his cap.

'If I'd known that was all you had to say, I certainly should not have stopped,' said Bell. 'Come along, Perry; *we* know our duty, if Charles doesn't.'

'But stay, I've something to say,' persisted Charles. 'What was that Miss Biddy said to you about visits, just before she went off?'

'Why, you must have ears as long as a donkey's to have overheard that! She said that while she was away we were not to receive gentlemen's visits.'

'Oh, well, but I'm not a gentleman.'

'I thought you particularly valued yourself on being one.'

'Decayed gentility ours is. What I meant was, I'm one of the family.'

'Not of ours—'

'But a friend of the family; I've the privilege of the entry.'

'Who gave it you?'

'Haven't I always walked in and out?'

'You certainly have,' said Bell, laughing, 'but now you must not do so any more; at least while Biddy is away.'

'What am I to do, then?' said Charles, looking blank.

'Stick to your books like Perry and me; study navigation.'

'Ay, do, Charley,' put in Perry, 'and then you can teach me.'

'Bother navigation!' said Charles. 'I'm not going to be a sailor.'

'What are you going to be, then?' said Bell. 'You've no other opening.'

'Oh, I only wish uncle Peregrine would offer *me* a berth in his ship!' cried Perry.

'Nonsense, boy, you're too young.'

'And you'll soon be too old,' retorted his younger brother.

Charles, without minding him, went on.

'What would *you* like me to be, Bell?'

'*Not* an idler,' said she quickly.

'Would you like me to adopt a profession for which I've no vocation?'

'Oh, pray don't use such long words.'

'I can't make out what's come to you this morning,' said he, rather sharply. 'You never talked like this before.'

Bell, however, only laughed at him; and catching Peregrine's hand, they raced off together, and were soon shut inside the door which at present was to be closed against Charles. As Miss Biddy was only gone away for a day or two, the separation did not threaten to be of heart-breaking duration; but she would soon put to sea again, and then, it seemed, he was no more to have the privilege of bestowing his leisure on her sisters; and this made him feel out of humour with Miss Biddy. Besides, Bell, who was always very downright, had taken quite a new tone, and said very unpalatable things to him. He had fancied she would like his being a clergyman, and would even like being a young clergyman's wife, some day or other, though she was older than he was; and he had been building castles in the air that were wonderfully like rose-covered

parsonages, with himself for the incumbent. He sighed, and wished his uncle, Captain Bertie, had not offered to take him on his next voyage.

Meanwhile Peregrine, who, to his great joy, had leave to take his lessons at Miss Frobisher's cottage during her absence, was seated at the little oval table, so close to Bell that she accused him of intending to get into her pocket; and was staring at the portrait of the hard-favoured, black-a-vised commander in Elizabethan costume, with ruff and doublet, confronting him from the opposite wall.

'Who 's that man?' said he.

'Now, Perry, you know, as well as I do, that it 's Sir Martin Frobisher,' said Bell. 'You only ask that to gain time.'

'Was Sir Martin Frobisher your grandfather?'

'No; he lived in the sixteenth century, and died years and years before my grandfather was born. He was wounded off Brest.'

'Is Brest in England?'

'O Perry, Perry, where 's your geography? Brest is in France. Look it out on the map.'

'O yes, I 'm very fond of maps and charts;

I like geography a deal better than grammar. Here 's Brest; how I should like to go there!'

'Well, now, you must leave off talking, and attend to your lesson.'

'O yes; because I 've something in view.'

'Something in view?' said she, amused. 'What is it?'

But Perry suddenly became very mysterious, and confined himself to very knowing smiles and nods. At length he said,—

'I want to get ever so many good marks, and no bad ones.'

'That is excellent,' said Bell. 'I believe you are going to turn out a very good boy at last.'

Encouraged by this opinion, he did his best to deserve it, and actually said his lessons without a mistake, and wrote a copy without a blot. Moreover, he wasted so much less time than usual in irrelevant remarks, that when all the usual routine had been gone through, they found they had a quarter of an hour to spare, which Bell proposed he should fill up with an extra column or two of spelling. But he exclaimed,—

'O no, no! that wouldn't be fair! Now, *would* it? That would be punishing me for being a good boy. Now, *wouldn't*

it ?' and to strengthen his arguments, he threw his arms round her neck and gave her so many kisses, that Bell, who could never be very hard upon him, capitulated, and asked what *would* be fair.

'Why, to reward me by telling me a story.'

'O what a boy you are for stories! I believe you think I 've a bagful of stories, and have nothing to do but to pull one out.'

'Yes, just that very thing. Now let 's settle ourselves nicely.' And, with one of his arms as far round her as it would extend, and his eyes fixed on her face, he awaited the expected treat. Bell looked very self-contained for a minute or two, and then began :

'Suppose we have a story about Sir Martin Frobisher. Here beginneth the chronicle of the life, death, and stirring adventures of Sir Martin Frobisher; volume one, chapter one.'

'Oh, jolly, jolly!' softly murmured Peregrine.

'There was a little boy, you must know, once on a time, in Yorkshire, whose name was Martin. He had blue eyes, light hair,

fat, rosy cheeks, a dimpled chin, and warm, fat little white hands with taper fingers, that were not so much hands as puds.'

'Why, that's a great deal more like me than that picture!'

'You think so, do you, Mr. Conceit? This little boy was always grubbing in the sands for shrimps and crabs and sea-snails, and blubbers, and anemones, and all manner of nasty live things; and before he could well walk he would crawl about, dragging after him a cart made of a great crab-shell. He was always talking to fishers, and dredgers, and smugglers, and pilots, and boat-builders, and begging things of them.'

'No, I don't.'

'Who said you did? I 'm talking of Martin Frobisher. But as soon as he grew to be a big boy, say of seven or eight years old, he took a wonderful turn for the better, and always kept his hands clean, and his hair combed, and never tore his clothes, and seldom had little lobsters and crabs crawling out of his pocket; and as to his lessons, he did them wonderfully, without one word of mistake, and wrote his copies without a single blot.'

'This story is growing a little bit stupid,'

said Perry, 'though it began so well. I suppose he had something in view?'

'In view? I should think so! He had it in view to get to the very top of his profession.'

'Ah, so should I, if I was to be a sailor.'

'He had it in view to discover a North-West passage, and during many years he made fruitless attempts to get some of the merchants to charter a vessel or two for that purpose.'

'I suppose there's nothing discoverable left now, is there?' asked Peregrine. 'Isn't everything discovered?'

'Well, I don't know what to say about that,' said Bell. 'No, I should think not.'

'Go on, go on.'

'You put me out so. At length, by continually urging Queen Elizabeth's courtiers to help him, he was enabled to fit out a private adventure, consisting only of two barks of twenty-five tons, and a pinnace of ten tons.'

'Stop, stop, stop, stop,' cried Perry, very rapidly. 'Two barks of twenty-five tons to go to the West Indies? why, the "Lively Peggy" is sixty tons! How very small they must have been!'

'Ship-building was not then what it is now,' said Bell; 'and besides, they wanted faith in him, and did not like to risk their money. In these vessels—'

'Cockle-shells,' muttered Perry.

'They put to sea and went to Greenland, where they entered a strait, to which Frobisher gave his own name.'

'Ah, shouldn't I like to do that!' said Peregrine, with a deep breath.

'Perry's Straits would sound very poor,' said Bell.

'Peregrine's Straits wouldn't, though! Well?'

'He sailed up it, about sixty leagues, landed, and took possession of the country in the Queen's name. The natives came forward and did him obeisance. He looked about him to see what were the productions of the country, and brought home with him a piece of black stone, seemingly veined with gold. Now, there's nothing people won't do for gold; they'll slave in every possible way for it, and undertake all sorts of risks. Therefore, directly it seemed likely that Frobisher had found a gold coast, Queen Elizabeth gave him one of her royal ships of two hundred tons.'

'More than three times as big as the "Lively Peggy."'

'And a hundred and twenty noble volunteers accompanied him. So they sailed here and they sailed there, and they saw all manner of wonderful things, and they got a cargo of the black and gold stone, and they came home and went out again with ever so many miners, refiners, and soldiers to guard the treasure. But oh, and alas! it turned out to be no great treasure after all, and the adventure was considered to have failed, and they all came back again. So here ends adventure the first; but you are not to suppose that Frobisher's time and trouble had all been spent in vain: he had extended the knowledge of geography, and become inured to hardships, and accustomed to command, and he became one of the Queen's tried and valued Admirals. And now the quarter of an hour is ended.'

'I say, Bell, if you were to tell me about grammar and everything this way, I should soon know it. Wouldn't it be jolly for you and me and Miss Biddy—no, only you and me—to fit out an adventure and go and look for black and gold stones!'

'What, without any crew?'

'No, we'd have Beale; but not Coles, I don't like him, I think he's treacherous—'

'Nonsense, Perry.'

'Well, I hope he isn't; but wouldn't it be nice for you and me to fit out an adventure?'

'O yes, charming. And now, away with you; for your time is up, and I have other things to do.'

Perry, without needing a second bidding, took up his satchel, and in the first place trotted down to the quay, where, as ill-fortune would have it, not a single blue jacket was to be seen. After looking wistfully, one way and another, he went alongside the 'Lively Peggy,' where Coles was the only living being in sight, and, in modest hope of an invitation on board, said,—

'Is Mr. Beale on board, Coles?'

Coles pretended not to hear him, but when, after a short pause, he said,—

'Is Beale on board, Mr. Coles?' he replied,

'No, sir.'

And Perry, seeing he was not going to be patronized by the unsociable sailor, looked about him a little, and then rather reluctantly sauntered home. Here he paid a visit to the study of his brother Charles, who, with

a frown on his face, was working some problem in navigation, for which Perry much respected him; and being afraid of directly interrupting, he did so indirectly, by looking into and examining one thing after another, and muttering, 'I wish I knew the use of this; I wonder what's the use of that? perhaps I shall know when I'm a man; I suppose I might know now, if anybody would tell me—' till Charles, unable to help hearing these hints, roughly told him to go about his business.

'But I haven't any,' said Peregrine. 'I've done mine, ever so long, and done it very well too, Bell said. Don't you wish you'd done yours?'

'You might as well say Miss Bell, Perry.'

'Why, *you* don't.'

'That's nothing to the purpose, and I do sometimes. Come, off with you, and don't meddle any more with my things.'

'Yes, I only want to look at this fine sextant. Do you know how to use it yet, Charley?'

'You be off, sir.'

'Can you box the compass, Charley? *I* can.'

'You want to get this book at your head,

I believe, Perry,' said Charles, looking very fierce, and making believe to be in the act of taking aim at him ; on which Perry took to his heels and clattered down stairs, while Charles, smiling a little, looked vacantly on the open page before him, without seeing a word that it contained.

CHAPTER V.

MRS. BERTIE (who kept a day-school) had dismissed her scholars, and was arranging her linen-closet, when, hearing words passing between her sons, she looked into Charles's room to see what was the matter.

'What were you and Perry falling out about?' said she.

'Oh, nothing,' said Charles, 'only he will come in here and plague so.'

'Plague is a strong expression. You must have patience with him; he is a very little boy.'

'Old enough to be very tiresome sometimes, and I really can't do anything if I am to be continually interrupted—' shutting the book before him with a clap. 'Oh, how sick I am of this!'

'Sick of what, my dear boy?'

'Of everything, I think, mother. I 'm doing no good at the present time, and I have nothing to encourage me in the future.'

'I think you are too desponding,' said she, sitting down beside him, 'and a little too inclined to be discontented. I remember, when I lost your dear papa, your telling me you did not mind what you were, if you could but be a comfort to me.'

'And I meant it, mother,' said Charles, softened. 'I am sure I am very sorry to have been anything but a comfort to you.'

'You have not been otherwise, Charley. Your uncle Hugh was very kind in undertaking your education, and always sent me good reports of you.'

'Uncle Hugh was indeed very kind. I should like to be just like him.'

'And your uncle Peregrine has been very kind too. Both your uncles have been kind to you in their several ways, though they have not prevailed on your grandfather to take any notice of you. Your clergyman uncle has brought you forward in your studies, and your sailor uncle offers you a berth in his ship.'

'Mother, my studies will be all a dead letter there.'

'O no! Whatever we learn well is useful to us, soon or late.'

'Not the sort of learning mine has been. It has fitted me for the church, not for the sea.'

'But the church, Charley, has no opening for you—'

'O yes, mother! it has an opening for every zealous, devoted man.'

'Well, I think not, my dear. There is only one living in the family; and your uncle holds it, and—'

'Long may he hold it! I 'm not speculating on his living—'

'But then, my dear, how would you live?'

'Let us leave that to Him who feeds the sparrows, mother! I own I should like to have this matter considered in a more spiritual light. Had the twelve apostles livings?'

'Oh, now you are talking nonsense,' said Mrs. Bertie, rising. 'I thought we were going to discuss it reasonably—'

'That 's what I want to do. Please, mother, don't go! Why should the church be only spoken of as a mere matter of living?'

'Why, that 's the very thing in question,' said Mrs. Bertie. 'I asked you how you were to get your living if you did not go to sea, and you immediately named the church.'

'Well, I did so; but as a profession, a calling—not as a mere matter of lucre. And such a living as I want, and could be content with, the church will always supply.'

'As how?' said Mrs. Bertie.

'If I distinguish myself as a scholar,' said Charles stoutly, 'I may get a fellowship.'

'But not marry upon it, though,' said Mrs. Bertie, thinking she had now hit the right nail on the head. 'You must give up all thoughts of Bell Frobisher.'

Charles coloured very much, and said, 'Who said I had any? That isn't fair of you, mother! My thoughts are my own; and I must be two years on board before I could be rated as a midshipman. I could no more marry as a poor sailor than as a poor scholar.'

'Well—no; but you would be sure to get a ship.'

'Did my father? He died a poor lieutenant.'

'Because your grandfather was displeased with him for marrying me, and would not push him. He would push you.'

'Ah, that's as may be; and, at any rate, I could not bear to be pushed.'

'Nonsense, my dear; he would ask a

favour downright, and it would be granted. However, I see you are resolved not to be dutiful or obliging.'

'Indeed, mother, you mistake me;' and there were tears in his eyes.

But she said, 'No, no; you will not do as I wish. I believe Perry says truly, that you are afraid.'

'If Perry said that, he deserves a good licking,' cried Charles, 'and shall get it.'

'Charles, Charles! is that the spirit of a clergyman?'

'But indeed, mother, it would provoke a saint. That young whelp really must be thrashed.'

'If you raise a finger against him, Charles, I'll have no more to do with you. Am I your mother? Am I mistress of my own house?'

There was an uncomfortable pause; a red spot had risen on her cheek, and Charles was sorry for what he had said.

'If I only knew how to please you—' began he.

'You may do it well enough,' said his mother. 'At present you have nothing to do but to remain quiet. Nothing *can* be done till your uncle returns; he may not

come home these six months. Meanwhile, read divinity if you will, at odd hours, it can do you no harm if it does no good; but devote the business part of the day to the studies your uncle Perry recommended. And it would be a very good thing, Charles, if you made a trip with Miss Biddy the next voyage she makes; it would prove to Perry that you are not afraid.'

'As to that, *he's* beneath my notice,' said Charles. 'I don't care what he thinks; but as for going with Miss Frobisher, I don't know that I should mind it, if she likes to take me; especially as she talks of going to Portugal. I am fond of languages, and might pick up a little Portuguese.'

'Yes, to be sure, and with the proper accent,' said Mrs. Bertie; 'and now come to dinner.'

The next time Charles met his brother, he said authoritatively, 'Come here, you, sir.'

Peregrine ran up to him with his innocent, smiling face, and received a pretty hard fillip on the side of his head.

'Charles, you hurt me!' said he, drawing back.

'I meant to hurt you,' said Charles gruffly.

'What's that for?' said Perry.

'For telling stories, sirrah.'

'*I* never tell stories! What story have I told?'

'That I was afraid to go to sea.'

'Why, I 'm sure I thought you were! Are not you? Then I 'm very glad!'

And he looked so truthful as he said it that Charles could not help laughing.

'Oh, you absurd chap!' said he. 'There! be off with you, and don't be such a chatterer.'

'Shall I go and tell Bell you are not afraid?'

'No,' roared Charles; 'do keep your tongue within your teeth; and mind your own affairs, if you have any.'

So Perry, placing his chest on the banister of the staircase, up with his heels, and slid all the way down it; then espying a rope in the lumber-closet, he uncoiled it, made a slip-knot, and threw it over a high beam that crossed the upper part of the kitchen. Having tightened it, he proceeded to swarm up it, fancying himself a sailor, and had nearly reached the beam, when, oh sad fate, unlucky chance! the knot suddenly untied itself, and down he came on the flagstones, where he sat for some time in a meditative

posture, wondering how in the world that knot could have untied itself.

Miss Biddy Frobisher came back on Saturday afternoon, having satisfactorily accomplished the object of her journey, and acquired a great deal of miscellaneous and practical information. Though her absence had been so short, her return was a source of lively interest to her family, who received her where they had parted, at the door of the little inn where the coach put up.

'Well, here you all are again, and here am I,' said she cheerily; 'glad to get a whiff once more of salt water and sea-weed. That London is the vilest place—' and here kisses and embraces passed between them.

'Let me carry your bag, Miss Biddy,' said Peregrine, officiously inserting himself between the sisters, and looking lovingly up at her.

'With all my heart, Perry, if you like it. Run home with it, my man.'

Off he ran, pleased to have a mission, while she followed with a sister on each arm.

'Well, Biddy, have you done well?'

'Mighty well, and I 've learnt many things I wanted to understand about. I 've made money, girls! and I 've put it in the Bank of

England. I don't want Mr. Craikie to know to a shilling what my profits and losses are.'

'No, certainly; and oh, Biddy, what do you think he's done? He's our landlord now,—he has bought our house over our head!'

Miss Biddy looked taken aback.

'No!' said she, with mortification in her tone. 'That comes of his having ready money and my having none. I don't like his getting us under his thumb.'

'But he can't turn us out, can he, as long as we pay our rent?'

'No.'

'Might not you have bought the house, sister, with the money you put into the Bank of England?'

'No, dear, it wasn't nearly enough. It will all go right enough, I dare say. All things will work together for our good, if we but fear God and keep His commandments. Run you home, girls, and get tea, while I step down to the quay to speak to Beale. It will not take me five minutes.'

They nodded, smiled, and obeyed; and she turned towards where the sea was coming in gently over the many-coloured pebbles and yellow sands with a pleasant

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murmur, quite different from the hoarse, raking sound with which it ran off the shingle in stormy weather. Now, all was calm, with a few white horses on the distant green expanse. One or two sails were visible in the offing; and near at hand sundry black, clumsy hulls, with masts and rigging denuded of sails, among which, conspicuous for beauty in Miss Biddy's partial eyes, lay the 'Lively Peggy.'

Beale spied her out, and immediately came forward with a smile of welcome, while Coles raised his ungainly length from where it had lain almost out of sight. At the same time Perry, who had raced after her, came up and slipped his hand into hers.

'How do you do, Beale? Has all gone well?'

'Ay, ay, Miss Biddy.'

'Have you kept on board, as I bade you, during my absence?'

'Ay, ay, mum.'

'Why, how can you say so, Beale?' put in little Peregrine. 'You weren't on board yesterday when I came down.'

Beale looked amused rather than affronted, and said, 'How do you make out that, master?'

'Why, I came down and asked Coles if you were aboard, and he said no.'

'How could you go and tell a child such lies?' said Beale, turning to Coles. 'See how you're found out.'

Coles grumbled something about his supposing he didn't want the young gentleman aboard, which Perry heard with silent but palpable amaze and disgust. He refrained, however, from saying, 'O you dreadful story-teller!'

CHAPTER VI.

' ELL, Beale,' said Miss Biddy, 'we shall begin clearing on Monday; and when the cargo is discharged, you may go ashore when you like. I don't think a fiery dragon will fly away with the "Lively Peggy" now I'm come back; but I never feel quite secure of it unless one of us is in the way.'

'Quite right, mum; though I never did hear of a fiery dragon flying away with a sixty-ton brig; but you can't be too cautious. Thank 'ee kindly, Miss Biddy, for licensing of me to go ashore; but I do declare to you I don't set no value on the shore, now my old woman's gone. However, not to be behindhand, mum, since you *are* so pressing, I'll look you up about your grog-time, and just drink your health and happiness in a tumbler mixed by the handsome young lady.

Somehow, she does hit off the right thing exactly.'

'You don't drink grog, do you?' said Perry doubtfully, as they walked up the quay.

'No,' said she, smiling; 'that was only Beale's figurative way of expressing supper-time.'

'*He* likes grog.'

'Most old sailors do. They are used to it; just as you are to small beer.'

'Miss Biddy, would you very much mind asking mamma to let me have a tarpaulin hat when I go to sea?'

'When that time comes, I daresay you will have everything complete; but I don't think it is coming just yet, Perry.'

'Shall not *you* go to sea soon?'

'Well, I can't say. I am not going to publish my plans just yet. When they're fixed, I'll let you know; which will be about the same as telling the town-crier.'

'All right,' thought Perry.

When the sisters sat at tea, Miss Biddy was questioned with lively interest concerning her doings in London.

'Well,' said she, 'I've formed a business connexion that promises to save me a great deal of trouble and risk. Moreover, I'm

going to have the "Lively Peggy" entered in Lloyd's register. The fee is but small, and when her character is known, I can get her insured. You know I always regretted that my father didn't insure the "Betsy." After my business was settled, I had still a little time on hand, so I went to see the playhouse—'

'The playhouse!' exclaimed they both. 'O Biddy, what play did you see?'

'I said playhouse, not play,' returned she, laughing; the old Brunswick Theatre that was—worth all the theatres in the world, now it's turned into what it is—a Sailor's Home.'

'Dear me,' said they with interest.

'The theatre fell to the ground, you know, the very day it was to have been opened. Somehow, playhouses are always coming to grief. It happened some years ago; and two good men—Captain Gambier and Captain Elliot—bought the ruins and the ground they stood on, and founded a home for sailors, that they might not be driven to low lodging-houses and taverns, and fall into bad company and get robbed. The Home holds a hundred men. You can't think how well everything is managed, and how comfortable they are. The greatest

cleanliness and order prevails; the rations are excellent; there are prayers morning and evening; good beds and good fires, round which the men may sit reading and talking. It was quite delightful to see them, some spinning yarns, some reading the Bible, one with a newspaper, another with Robinson Crusoe. I had a long talk with them, and they seemed highly satisfied and very thankful.'

'That is very nice, Biddy. What a good thought it was of Captain Gambier's!'

'Indeed it was; and of Captain Elliot's. He gave up his money and time; he gave up his comfortable home, to live on the spot and watch the progress of his work while the Home was building, though he could only get a poor lodging, all among the gin-shops.'

'I call those two noble captains benefactors,' said Bell with energy.[1]

[1] The reader needs hardly to be told that the Home has since been enlarged to accommodate some hundreds of men, and that other Homes have arisen in various places, all needing the support of

> 'The gentlemen of England,
> Who live at home in ease.'

The statistics are something astonishing. The wages which the sailors remit to the safe keeping of the Homes amount to tens of thousands of pounds; but these sums, rescued from waste and pillage, in fact but feebly represent the blessings to the men of which the Home has been the medium.

It would have done any benevolent heart good to see Miss Biddy that evening, as she sat at the open window settling her accounts, and gazing complacently and thankfully at the first entry she had been able to make as a set-off against her father's debt. It consisted only of two numerals, it is true, and the debt was represented by three; but it was a beginning to which she might reasonably hope, by patience, prudence, and the blessing of God, to make continual additions; and she wrote in very small text at the foot of the page, *Laus Deo.* Where she picked up those two Latin words, and how she came to understand them, I am not able to say; but they were certainly inscribed with an intelligent sense of their meaning.

Looking out as she turned the key in her desk, she saw Mrs. Bertie coming up the garden accompanied by Charles, who, however, speedily dropped off to proffer his services to Bell in watering the flowers. She could not help smiling at his so promptly resuming 'the privilege of the *entrée*,' and, as she greeted her friend, she said,—

'Charles is at his old amusement again, I see.'

'Ah, poor Charles,' said Mrs. Bertie, shak-

ing her head, 'he is giving me a good deal of anxiety at present, and I want to speak to you about him.'

'Pray do,' said Miss Biddy. 'What can he have been doing? I should never have suspected your having any trouble with one so good and gentle.'

'With all his seeming gentleness, Charley has a will of his own—'

'Yes, I daresay; boys will be boys, you know—'

'Boy as he is, he fancies himself man enough to fall in love with your sister Bell.'

'Oh, that's all nonsense,' said Miss Biddy, laughing. 'As much nonsense as it would be for Perry to declare himself in love with me.'

'Charles will have it, though, to be no nonsense,' returned Mrs. Bertie very seriously; 'and he's as old as his poor father was when he first began to think of me; and one imprudent match is enough in a family; so that I really don't know what to do, for his grandfather, you know, would never hear of it—'

'I don't suppose his grandfather ever *will* hear of it,' said Miss Biddy with a little umbrage. 'Why should he? for there is nothing to hear. Bell does not give him any encouragement; I left word that he was

not to be received here in my absence, and you know she has not been to you. So, what's the matter? Do you wish me to speak to him?'

'O no, that would not be at all a good plan, I think,' said Mrs. Bertie. 'If we could only separate them a little—'

'How separate them more than I have done already? *You* brought him here this evening—'

'Because he would come, so I came with him.'

'Oh, then he brought *you?* Well, I can't see what's to be done; I can't send Bell anywhere. Your best plan would be to send *him* away.'

'That's just what I was wishing; only where? He must remain in expectation of his uncle Perry's return, and I've nowhere to send him but to the Rev. Mr. Bertie's.'

'Where can you better send him?'

'You see, he's so inclined for the church already, that if he goes there his predilection will only be strengthened, for Mr. Bertie is such a very good apostolic man—quite another Bernard Gilpin.'

'Let him go there by all means,' said Miss Biddy. 'What can you wish better for

Charles than that he should be another Bernard Gilpin ?'

But Mrs. Bertie shook her head : it did not fall in with her views that Charles should be a clergyman. Charles was her eldest son ; the only living in the family gift belonged to his uncle, and would pass from him to his son. Charley could hope for no church patronage, but if he went on board his uncle's ship, Captain Bertie would certainly provide for him.

'Well,' said Miss Biddy after a pause, 'I never knew any good myself come of violently forcing one's bent ; and if Charles is cut out for a clergyman, I don't suppose he'll ever make a good sailor. He is getting rather old, too.'

'Yes, but Captain Bertie will probably return before he counts another year ; and as for his being cut out for a clergyman, how do we know what he is cut out for till he has tried ? I think we must just rub on till Captain Bertie comes back, only he must not go to Mr. Bertie meanwhile.'

'Well, you know best about that,' said Miss Biddy. 'A young lad with no regular supervision in a place like this is very likely to get into mischief.'

'I do wish you would take him with you, the next trip you make.'

'Who? I?' cried Miss Biddy in surprise. 'I take a man-of-war's man on board the "Lively Peggy?"'

'He's not a man-of-war's man yet, nor a man in any sense, I think; and it would do him a world of good—get him out of harm's way, as you say, and teach him what the sea is. Why, he has hardly ever been out of sight of land, and when he did go out, he lay on deck all the time sea-sick. Perry says he knows he's afraid.'

'A precious sailor he'll make then,' said Miss Biddy, laughing. 'A coward and sea-sick!'

'No, I don't say he's a coward,' said Mrs. Bertie, 'but—in short, he hardly knows what blue water is, and I wish you would show him. It might bring things to a crisis.'

'Charles is perfectly welcome to a trip, the next time I go to sea,' said Miss Biddy, 'and he will be out of Bell's way, as *you* say.' (Mrs. Bertie winced a little at this.) 'Let him come then, by all means—he can at least learn something of splicing and reefing, and how to go aloft and take in a topsail' (which she pronounced *torsel*).

'My dear friend, I am very much obliged to you; I cannot express how grateful you make me.'

'No need. It is nothing. Pray say nothing about it.'

And when Charles, seeing their eyes directed towards him, came in-doors, she frankly and cordially asked him whether he would accompany her on her next trip. Charles, to whom the thought was not altogether new, accepted it very thankfully; and they were all very well pleased with one another.

At the short day's close, though the hour was still early, Mrs. Bertie went away, for it was Saturday evening; and Perry's washing and brushing was a duty she performed herself. Charles lingered behind as long as he could, and then reluctantly followed. Miss Biddy stood in pleased reverie, listening to the confused murmurs of the little town, and to the gentle ripple of the waves on the beach, each wave as it came in flashing with phosphoric light.

Just as she closed the little green shutters that opened outwards, Beale, true to his appointment, arrived at grog-time. His approval of Bell's mixing was now an estab-

lished joke; and so anxious was Bell not to lose her place in his estimation, that I fear his tumbler was stronger than half-and-half; but, as he observed, the sweetness took a good deal of the strength out of it; and it had no more effect on his head than if it had been toast-and-water.

'Beale, how should you like to go to Lisbon?' said Miss Biddy abruptly.

'Lisbon?' exclaimed he in evident dismay. 'What ever makes you think of going there, Miss Biddy?'

'I hope to do a good stroke of business.'

'Haven't you done a good stroke of business, this v'yage, Miss?'

'Indeed I have, and I am very thankful.'

'Then for goodness' sake don't go and do a bad stroke of business, Miss, and be spiling it all.'

'I don't mean to spoil it all, I assure you. I suppose you think you shall be out of your soundings?'

'As to out of my soundings,' said Beale, after draining his tumbler to the last drop, 'I'd undertake to handle that there craft from here to Calcutta; but then, look you, it must be under conditions.'

'What are those conditions?'

'Perhaps, Miss, you mightn't like to hear 'em.'

'O yes, I should.'

'Well, mum, then the first condition would be, I must have a proper crew; second, I must have a proper liftenant; and, third, I must have a proper cap'n.'

'Much obliged to you for the compliment, I 'm sure, Beale! I see I must look out for a more efficient sailing-master.'

'Begging of your pardon, Miss, most humbly, I 'm sure, wouldn't it be better to—'

'To what?'

'To give up the v'yage to Lisbon?'

'No, Beale, it would not; and I know all about it, and have quite made up my mind to it; so it only remains for you to decide whether you will go with me or not.'

'Oh, there 's no question about that,' said Beale. 'Where you go I go, and there will I be buried—or drownded, as is more likely. Only, if you 'll be pleased to tell me jest this one thing, Miss—'

'Well, what is it?'

'When you gets there, can you speak Portugee?'

'No, I cannot; but I am going to take Mr. Charles Bertie with me, who is a great

scholar, and understands all manner of languages. Besides, I 've engaged a pilot who is returning to Lisbon.'

Beale said it made all the difference, if they were going to the Portugeese with a Portugoose; and when Miss Biddy proceeded to unfold to him in confidence all that she had gleaned in London, and all that she intended to do at Lisbon, she gradually overcame the old man's reluctance, the more so that there was hardly anything he would not do to please Miss Biddy, though he did not like to own himself ruled by a woman.

'Now,' said she in conclusion, 'you are not to go and repeat all this to Coles, nor yet to Captain Spinks or Mr. Craikie.'

'Just as if I should,' said Beale. 'Why, if I were to tell Coles, I might just as well tell the other two, for he 'd do it if I didn't. He 's a great deal too thick with them old—well, I won't call no names, but we know what they 've been in times past, Miss, and if we don't know we do guess. Why, did you hear how many tubs was captivated last week by the "Alert?" They were precious sly, them chaps, as thought to run 'em that cloudy night, but the cutter came round the corner just as the moon shone out, and

down she was upon the boats afore they could heave the tubs over and place a buoy. Took 'em every one, Miss, and the men likeways, who are now in prison, and their boat sawn in two.'

Beale told this with great glee, and had evidently no sympathy with the smugglers.

'Laws is laws,' said he; 'I don't set up to say whether they're good or bad ones, but while they're laws, they're laws; and are we to go and help the foreigners to make money of us? In a fair way of business I grant ye, but not against the Excise. But la! if you'd seen Cap'n Spinks's face and Mr. Craikie's! If they'd no finger in the pie, leastways they'd a fellow-feeling with them that had; and it was as good as a pantomime to see their grimaces. I laughed in my sleeve, but I could only laugh to myself, for Coles is as fond of 'em as if he was in their pay.'

'Do you think he is?' said Miss Biddy, with a sudden misgiving.

'No, Miss, no; I think you may trust him.'

'But, Beale, you must take care he never smuggles over things in my brig without my knowledge.'

'Trust me for that,' said he, winking hard at her; 'Coles knows I would peach.'

'No,' continued he, after a moment's pause, 'I'm an old man now, and it may be thought there's not much work left in me; no more there isn't—in my hands: but I've a head that can work a ship, and a heart that'll never see my cap'n wronged, or have dust thrown in his eyes; and that's you, Miss; so here's wishing you and the young ladies the best of good-nights.'

CHAPTER VII.

HAVING dismissed Beale, Miss Biddy now produced a crumpled newspaper from her pocket, and proceeded to con the report of the Commissioners of Customs for the year, and occasionally to expound it to her sisters, to whom it was less interesting than to herself.

'On the whole,' observed she, 'the commercial prosperity of this country during the past twelvemonth, notwithstanding drawbacks, has been something remarkable; and I don't see how we can excuse it to ourselves that we don't return public thanks for it. To begin, for instance, with the return of the declared values of British and Irish exports—'

'O Biddy!' interrupted Hetty implor-

ingly, 'I am sure we shall not understand that.'

'You ought to try to do so, my dear; it would enlarge your mind. Everything practical is useful, and everything useful is good for us one way or another.'

However, she spared them the figures, and only went on murmuring from time to time, 'Depressing influences of war—stimulus to home manufactures—hum, hum, hum—visible falling off in our exports—rise in the value of haberdashery—of hardware and cutlery—all this is vastly interesting to people that will give their minds to it—comparison of demand and supply. This is highly important to me, or I may bring over what there is no market for.'

'Half-past ten,' said Bell, glancing at the clock. 'Have you any stockings, Biddy, that want mending?'

'Not at this time of night,' said she, smiling. 'Come, I 'm ready now to shut up.'

On Sunday morning, as she dressed herself, she could see through her window, without the aid of a glass, Coles swabbing the deck, and Beale quietly poring over his Bible. He was not much of a scholar, and

it was only by dint of considerable effort that he could make out a text here and there.

Miss Biddy had an eye for gay colours, and had brought her sisters a bandbox full of finery from Jersey. So it was in a flutter of ribbons—pink, blue, and green—that the three started together for church, whither the whole population of the little town seemed streaming. At the white gate of the churchyard stood a row of young men, mostly sailors, who made it a rule not to turn in till the bell ceased ringing, and who formed the select Areopagus of the congregation, passing their judgment on all comers, to the secret annoyance of many. Among these might be seen the tall frame of Coles, who had made himself as smart as a sailor well could, from his polished low-crowned hat and clean blue shirt to the flower in his button-hole and smart bows to his well-blacked shoes. Beside him stood a handsome young sailor-boy, named Joel Sprent, noted for his good conduct as much as his good looks, and the sole support of his widowed mother. Both these touched their hats respectfully as Miss Biddy passed, she nodding cheerfully in return; and as soon

as she passed out of sight and the bell stopped, most of them turned lazily towards the church porch, but Coles took a different direction.

'What, a'n't you going to church, Coles?' said Sprent.

'No,' said Coles, 'I 'm not so much of a story-teller as to say I 'm a miserable sinner when I a'n't. If I 'm the one, I know I 'm not the other.' He laughed as he turned off, and there were one or two so weak-minded and low-toned as to laugh too, and even to lounge after him; but Joel Sprent was not one of them, for he entered the church.

It was a very hot Sunday, and the little church was very close, though the door was left open, so that, at every pause, the distant roll of the waves, and the nearer chirping of the birds in the tall old elms, could be distinctly heard inside. When the service was ended, and people streamed homewards, salutations were exchanged in the churchyard, and then families and friends fell into their usual little knots. As a matter of course, the Berties and Frobishers walked together, and Peregrine began to tell how many persons he had counted who had gone fast asleep.

'Fie, Peregrine! you should have been better employed,' said his mother.

'Then I should have dropped asleep too, mamma,' said he.

'It was very difficult to keep awake, I think,' said Bell. 'The church was so hot, and the sermon so dull.'

'The very worst I ever heard,' said Charles. 'Men have no right to preach such sermons.'

'Hush, Charles; I'm ashamed of you.'

'Why, now, what can *you* recollect of it, mother, that made the least impression on you? Did not it all go in at one ear and out at the other?'

Mrs. Bertie was dignified and silent.

'He didn't once mention our Saviour's name in it,' pursued Charles.

'As for that,' said Bell, 'Matthew Henry has observed that the name of God does not once occur in the book of Esther, but that the finger of God is traceable in it throughout.'

'Yes, and His finger is traceable in our daily affairs, and yet His name seldom passes our lips.'

'Well said, Charles,' said Miss Biddy approvingly. He thanked her with a look.

'Such a text!' resumed he presently: '"So long as thou doest good unto thyself, men will speak well of thee!" It required such consummate handling!'

'Mr. Foxey pricked up his ears at that,' said Perry, laughing.

'Well, Perry, what text should *you* like better?' said Bell, taking his hand. 'Now, mind what you say.'

'I know!' cried he: '"There go the ships!"'[1]

'Oh! fie for shame!'

'Something might be made out of it, though,' said Charles.

'What?'

'I can't tell you off-hand; but I'm sure a good sermon, an influential sermon, might be preached on those words.'

'Perry, will you come and say your catechism to me this afternoon?' said Bell aside to him.

'Yes, if you'll come and sit with me in the old boat.'

This was an old wrecked hull, stranded on the beach.

'Very well, I will.'

Afterwards, when Perry had eaten his two

[1] Ps. civ. 26.

helpings of damson pudding, he ranged all the stones round the edge of his plate, and tried a kind of Sortes, saying—'To go, not to go; to go, not to go,' etc., ending with '*To* go—O be joyful!' and clapped his hands.

'Fie, Perry! that's not a Sunday amusement,' said his mother.

He prattled in his disjointed way till the clock struck two, when he snatched up his cap, and darted down to the old boat, where Bell was comfortably seated already; and here, after helping him through his catechism, and hearing him repeat sundry hymns, she read to him the narrative of St. Paul's shipwreck.

On Sunday evenings, Captain Spinks was wont to take possession of a certain white garden-seat, placed just outside Miss Biddy's garden-railings, where he smoked, and used his spy-glass, and bestowed his conversation on any one that would oblige him by listening. Many a queer story, with half-shut eye and knowing leer, did the old smuggler retail on these occasions; and though it was an understood thing that he had now retired from business, there were some who thought he would not be sorry to be at it again.

Miss Biddy generally had a little chat with him for auld lang syne, and because he had been a chum of her father's; and many was the sly poke he had at her seamanship, though pretending a profound respect for her all the while. He was often joined here either by Mr. Craikie, or Mr. Foxey, a pettifogging lawyer, whom Perry called 'fox by name and fox by nature.'

'So those misfortunate fellows have been tried and cast, mum,' said he, 'that were taken by the "Alert."'

'Why do you call them misfortunate fellows?' said she. 'They were caught defrauding the revenue.'

'Revenue here, revenue there, you 'll never persuade me it would have done Gov'nment any harm to wink at the escape of those poor fellows, two of them fathers of young families.'

'A father of a young family has no right to infringe the laws.'

'Do you mean to say, now, that if I was to ask you as a friend, just to bring me over a little pig of tobacco—'

'I would not do it, unless the duty was paid.'

'What! not to your father's friend?'

'No; nothing should tempt me to cheat the revenue.'

'O my stars and garters!' Here he exchanged a wink with Mr. Craikie, unseen by Miss Biddy.

'The free-trade isn't what it was,' presently observed Mr. Craikie soberly.

'No, pretty nigh done up. Tell me now, Mr. Craikie, the rights of that seizure at Jersey, in which Nat Bowline was implicated.'

'Oh, it was a bad job for him. Four thousand five hundred pound weight of tobacco stalks was seized on board his vessel at Jersey, ready for taking to Ireland. The vessel and stalks were forfeited, and the parties concerned prosecuted and convicted.'

'There now, that was a fine kettle of fish! That would go nigh to ruin poor Nat.'

'Served him right, I think,' said Miss Biddy. 'Don't *you* think so, Mr. Craikie?'

He exchanged a covert look with Captain Spinks, and said, 'Oh, of course.'

'And so you'll soon be off again, Miss Biddy?' said the Captain.

'Who told you so?'

'Coles said he thought you would.'

'Coles knows nothing about it.'

'Dear heart; I should have thought you took your tried hands into your counsels?'

'Never sooner than I need.'

'You made a pretty penny by this last voyage, I daresay?'

'Oh, pretty fair, as times go.—There's a sail in the offing, with three masts.'

'Where?' said they both; and up went the glass.

'If the French were to come over,' said Captain Spinks, 'it's my notion they'd land hereabouts.'

'We couldn't do much to hinder them,' said Mr. Craikie.

'Very little *in*-deed.'

'Well, I hope we should show a little fight,' said Miss Biddy. 'Even the women should do their best in an emergency like that.'

'Bless you, *they* could do nothing.'

'I don't know that. I should certainly do my best, for one.'

'Can you fire a musket?'

'O yes.'

'Come, I respect a woman who can do that,' said Captain Spinks.

'I can't make out that sail exactly.'

'Give me the glass.'

'Can you make anything out?'

'Yes; it's the "Hornet."'

'I don't think it can be.'

'Yes, it is. I can count her guns.'

'Give me the glass. I'm growing blind, I think. I ought to know the "Hornet." Yes, it is. Yes, it's the "Hornet."'

Next morning, just after the breakfast-table was cleared, Perry burst in, with a face the colour of scarlet, and, laying his hand on Miss Biddy's arm, said, 'Didn't I tell you I hadn't had a single bad mark?'

'Yes, you did,' said she, 'and I was very glad of it.'

'Then, a'n't you going to take me with you your next voyage?'

'Take *you*, dear? No.'

The scarlet became crimson, and the tears crowded into his eyes. Almost choking, he said,—

'Why, you said you would!'

'O no, no, Perry dear! You make a strange mistake. I have said I would take your brother Charles.'

He burst into a flood of tears, and said,—

'You did; you did, indeed; down on

the quay, the day after you came back, just as we met Mr. Craikie.'

'What did I say?' said she in great concern, and racking her head to remember what she could have promised.

'I asked you,' sobbed Perry, 'whether, if I was a very good boy, and didn't get a single bad mark, you would take me next time; and you said you would. And I haven't had one bad mark since; have I, Bell?'

'No, you have not, poor Perry,' said she, pitying him with all her heart.

'My dear little boy,' said Miss Biddy, drawing him to her, and kissing his hot, smeared cheeks, 'I had not the least idea you had so misunderstood me. I suppose I said something at random, while I was thinking of something else, which you mistook for a promise. I am very sorry, my poor little boy; but it cannot be helped now. Charles is going with me at your mamma's desire, and I am quite sure she would not spare you both. Only suppose if we were drowned!'

'Why, drowning isn't a worse death than any other, is it?' said Perry, drying his eyes; 'I 've heard it was less painful.'

'Has anybody come back to tell us so?' said she.

'Why, no,' said he, 'but people that were thought to be drowned have been re-susticated.'

Here Miss Biddy and Bell burst out laughing at his losing himself in such a long word, but he looked reproachfully at them and very piteously.

'My boy,' said Miss Biddy, still with her arm round him, 'you must not go with me this time, for many reasons; but I promise you, Perry, and this promise shall not be broken, that if your mamma will intrust you to me the next voyage after this, I will take you.'

'Thank you,' said he, with an April smile, and putting up his mouth to be kissed; 'that's better than nothing; and it will be something to keep in view. Only, it's a long while to be trying for none but good marks.'

'Oh, we won't be too hard about the marks. I have made my promise this time without conditions.'

This seemed to relieve him a good deal.

'Of course, you'll try, in a general way, to be a good boy.'

'O yes, I always do.'

His eyes again filled with tears, and his voice was very subdued.

'Perry,' said Bell, in her resolute, encouraging voice, 'this is just like one of the trials that Sir Martin Frobisher had at your age.'

'*Is* it?'

'It is quite likely; and if you please, I am ready to tell you the second chapter of his surprising and remarkable adventures.'

'Oh, do, do.' And she made room for him beside her in the great arm-chair, he squeezing himself into an incredibly small space, and laying his tear-stained cheek close to hers.

'If you fit out a very good adventure this time,' said he in a low voice, 'I think it may make me a little more happy.'

'Ahem. Here beginneth part the second of Sir Martin Frobisher's very remarkable adventures, never before published; showing how, at the age of seven, he had a very trying disappointment in consequence of his elder brother's being taken instead of himself on a cruise by one of Queen Elizabeth's maids of honour, and how they all had a dead calm and no adventures, and were

very sea-sick; and showing how Martin Frobisher received them with sympathy and condolence on their return, and prepared for them a banquet of lobsters, crabs, prawns, shrimps, winkles, and whelks. And how the maid of honour soon afterwards fitted out another adventure, and took Martin with her to the Fortunate Isles, where they saw dolphins and flying fish, and mermaids playing on dulcimers; and how Martin fell asleep on a bed of golden sand in a grotto of glittering crystals, and dreamed that he was destined to find a North-West passage, and bring home a shipload of black and gold stones.'

It may be suspected that Bell had full as much pleasure in spinning these rigmaroles as Perry had in listening to them. By the time their 'happy hour' was ended his chest had ceased to heave, his eyes had ceased to be watery, and he wanted nothing to refit him for general society but to do what the patriarch Joseph did when overwhelmed at the sight of his brethren—to wash his face.

Charles met him on the stairs before he could perform this needful operation, on his return home, and said lightly—

'What 's been the matter with you, youngster, this morning? In disgrace about lessons, hey?'

'Charles, I 've had a good deal to try me,' said Perry, 'but never mind. I 've something in view; so it doesn't signify.'

'You 've a precious dirty face on view at all events.'

'Bell didn't mind kissing it,' said Perry.

'Humph!' muttered Charles; 'I wouldn't mind having a dirty face myself, on that condition.'

And now the 'Lively Peggy,' having discharged her cargo, is once more going to put to sea. All the necessary forms have been gone through, a small but well-assorted cargo taken on board, the few necessary repairs effected, water and stores taken in, the pilot is on board, and nothing remains but to say Goodbye, walk on board, heave anchor, and set sail.

Charles has made his preparations for the trip with no small self-importance: his dress has assumed a touch of the smart young sailor; his knotted handkerchief is decidedly anti-clerical; his face has assumed a look of deep deliberation, while selecting, cleaning, and packing several nautical instruments;

which, with a small case of books, secured by a leather strap, have been viewed with respect by Beale, Coles, and Bob, when brought on board; he is heard to whistle 'Rule Britannia;' and, for the moment, the 'Lively Peggy' has decided ascendency over the black-eyed Bell.

CHAPTER VIII.

PERRY squeezed Bell's hand hard as the 'Lively Peggy' slowly obeyed the helm and gradually went out of harbour; but Bell said cheerfully, 'Wave your cap, Perry!' which he instantly did, though his lip quivered. Miss Biddy answered the salute with her handkerchief, and Charles with his hat, while his brown curls streamed in the wind.

'How nice he looks!' said Perry; 'just like a real sailor. I wonder if he 'll be sick —it blows rather fresh. There 's a pitch!— *I* should have liked it, but perhaps Charley is a little bit afraid. They 'll make Portugal in about four days if the wind is fair. I wonder which way the wind will blow to-morrow. I think I shall pray for a fair wind.'

'And now, we 'll try how many good marks

we can get,' said Bell. 'But we'll have a good race first.'

'Yes, only let us first watch the "Lively Peggy" out of sight.'

'She may not be quite out of sight for an hour.'

'If anything were to happen to her, we should be sorry we had lost sight of her sooner than we need,' observed Perry.

'So we should,' said Bell, immediately sitting down on some wood-work. They quietly watched the vessel till it was lost in a light haze.

'Charley and I parted quite friends,' said Perry softly.

That day he did his lessons remarkably well, though he seemed subdued. Once or twice he complained of headache. Directly he had finished his lessons he set off homewards, and established himself in Charles's little study, which Charles had given him charge of in his absence. He looked with leisurely interest at everything, without disturbing anything he thought Charles would not like touched. He put a few things in their places; dusted a few others, and sat down thoughtfully in Charles's chair. Suddenly he started up, ran off for a small

parchment-covered volume with several leaves torn out, with a good deal of blank paper remaining, which his mother had given him. Placing this on Charles's writing-table and dipping his pen in the ink, he began with great zeal to inscribe the title-page with 'The Life, Death, and Remarkable Adventures of Sir Martin Frobisher, Book the First, Chapter the First.' And then, in his very smallest text, he proceeded to set down Bell's long yarn, as closely as his memory would supply it. Having thus found a resource in authorship, I need not say that Perry was happy.

Next morning he presented himself to Bell with a bright face.

'The wind continues fair,' cried he.

'Did you pray for it?' said she, rather too lightly.

He gave her a little nod.

'Come, you are a good boy,' said she, kissing him. 'I see we shall get plenty of good marks to-day.'

They set to work; and while he was bending his head over his copy, she suddenly said:

'Perry, what is the matter with you? What is this red all under the roots of your hair?'

'Red!' repeated he, looking up in surprise.

'Yes, and about your eyes. Let me look at your wrists. You have a rash under your skin. You 've caught something!'

He looked rather alarmed.

'Don't be frightened,' said Bell, running to the door. 'Here! Hetty, I want you.'

'I can't come,' returns Hetty; 'I 'm making the pudding.'

'But you must,' rejoined Bell. Then, running into the kitchen, she said to her sister in a low voice—

'Perry is going to be very ill, I believe, with measles or scarlet fever, or something. He has a rash under his skin.'

'Dear me,' said Hetty, 'shall we catch it? You had better send him home directly.'

'He might get chilled; the rash might strike in. Besides, there are Mrs. Bertie's little scholars. One of us had better go and bring her up.'

'Do you go, then,' said Hetty, 'for my hands are all over flour.'

So Bell went back to Perry, who had heard every word, and was sitting like a little martyr, and said—

'I 'm going to fetch your mamma, Perry

dear, and she will see all about it. Never mind: I don't suppose it's anything particular.'

'And if it is,' said Perry, 'you'll find my will at the end of my log, in the toy cupboard; you're my executor.'

This almost upset Bell, but the next minute she was rushing down to Mrs. Bertie's, running against Mr. Craikie by the way, with a hurried 'I beg your pardon.' He looked after her with a little umbrage.

Directly Mrs. Bertie heard the tidings, she exclaimed, 'Oh, I knew he was too good to live! My darling Perry! And what shall I do with my school? I will dismiss the children directly, and bring Mr. Heath with me.'

'Pray be careful what you say to the little girls,' said Bell; 'it will be best not to spread the alarm.'

'Certainly, certainly,' said Mrs. Bertie, struggling against tears. 'It would shut up my school; and then, where should we be?'

So she went and discharged her little scholars, who looked surprised, but by no means disappointed at the unexpected holiday, and then went to the doctor, Mr. Heath, who fortunately had not started on his

round, and who accompanied her to Miss Frobisher's house, talking of things in general, while she answered him at random. So they soon became silent.

Now, Mr. Heath's little girl was one of Mrs. Bertie's scholars, and Mr. Heath's little girl had never had measles or scarlet fever; consequently he had already decided in his own mind that if Perry proved to have either, he must remain where he was, or his little girl must be taken from school; and the former plan was preferable to himself. After a very brief examination of the little boy, who had wound himself up to a state of mind similar in kind, if not in degree, to that of Regulus in the cask full of nails, he pronounced decisively the single word—'Measles.'

Bell gave a sigh of relief. She had no fears for herself; for she and Hetty had had the measles, and they had not had scarlet fever. And when Mr. Heath said Perry ought to go to bed at once, but not have too many bedclothes heaped on him, she said—

'He shall have my room, and Hetty and I will sleep in Biddy's bed.'

'Surely he may come home?' said Mrs. Bertie hastily.

'Death to your school, ma'am,' said Mr. Heath with brevity. 'Your little boy may take it lightly, but that is no security that those who catch it of him will.'

'Oh, then, don't run any risk, mamma,' said Perry. 'I shall have everything very comfortable here, and I love Bell almost as much as you.'

'You good boy!' said Bell.

In short, after Mrs. Bertie's pleading very hard to take him home, wrapped up in blankets, she was led to admit it a great privilege that he could remain where he was, she having access to him as much as she liked. So Mr. Heath took leave, after arranging everything his own way; and Mrs. Bertie then undressed Perry and put him to bed, where he thought it very funny to be in broad daylight; but the novelty of the situation, combined with a certain feeling of minor martyrdom, and, in addition to that, a bad headache, made bed no such bad place after all. Bell quietly moved her belongings into the adjoining room, while Mrs. Bertie silently turned in her head the various exigencies of the case; and the result of her reflections was, that she had better go round to the parents of her seven little pupils,

lay the matter before them, and propose to them that the children should have a holiday till Perry began to get well. By this means she would have leisure to nurse him.

So, as soon as Bell returned and offered to sit with Perry, Mrs. Bertie thankfully went away to make arrangements. She had once been a very pretty, and was still a very interesting-looking woman; her manners were ladylike, and her education was much superior to what her neighbours had enjoyed any opportunity of acquiring. Her widow's dress too, and her meritorious devotion of her time and abilities to the maintenance of her family, always paying her way with exactitude, and keeping up appearances so nicely, yet without the least finery, combined to obtain for her a very favourable opinion in the little borough. Therefore her round of visits procured for her many gratifying tokens of respect and esteem; and in most instances, on her own account as well as theirs, the parents decided that it would be much better for their children to consider their Michaelmas holiday put forward a little. But there were three instances of a different opinion. Mrs. Heath, Mrs. Foxey, and Mrs. Jones preferred that the schooling

should be persisted in, and though Mrs. Bertie need not have referred it to their decision, yet, having done so, she felt obliged to abide by it. Mrs. Foxey's and Mrs. Jones's children had already had measles, so they were in no fear; and when Mrs. Bertie ventured to hint the danger of infection to Mrs. Heath, that lady smiled sweetly, and said—

'Why should your clothes communicate infection any more than Mr. Heath's? If medical men carried infection from house to house, they would be walking pests.'

So it was carried against her, and then poor Mrs. Bertie thought it necessary to repeat the visits previously made, and to say that since Mesdames Heath, Jones, and Foxey would not let her off, she could as well give her time to seven pupils as three. But no; the other parties had meanwhile made up their minds to the holiday, and could not now be disappointed of it; they openly called Mrs. Heath and Co. selfish and inconsiderate, and expressed their own sense of danger; so Mrs. Bertie had to resign herself to this very unsatisfactory conclusion, with something of the mortification at wasted labour that the worker on the

tread-wheel feels when it grinds no corn. Maternal solicitude soon got the better of vexation. She made her arrangements at home, and hastened back to Perry, who had long been impatient for her, and had so often asked Bell to see whether mamma were coming, that at length she placed herself at the window and promised to tell him directly Mrs. Bertie appeared in sight.

Thus, Mrs. Bertie no sooner approached the cottage than she saw Bell watching for her at the window, not with perturbation, as if in immediate want of her, but fixedly, with that look of depth and earnestness her countenance often wore; and she could not help thinking how attractive was that face which filled Charles's daily thoughts. There was a Spanish beauty about Bell's finely moulded brow and pear-shaped face; her large, dark eyes, which Charles compared to black velvet, were beautifully set under her eyebrows; her nose was nearly straight, her lips full, deep red, her skin not olive, but very brown, yet clear and smooth as satin. She was quite unconcerned about her looks, and took very little pains to set them off, having, indeed, no one she cared to please but those she pleased already; none of them

caring a straw whether she wore pink, blue, green, or homely russet-brown.

Hester, of whom too little has been said, was of quite another mould. She was very matter-of-fact, undemonstrative, and practical. She made excellent puddings. She did not care much for flowers. She would rather have liked to be admired, but did not see any chance of being so. She was contented with a little, but would have been pleased to have more. She was willing to make nice things for Perry, if he might have them, but had no notion of losing a night's rest for him. He was welcome to her share of the bedroom, but she thought it would have done him no harm to be carried home in a blanket.

She was almost as pretty in her way as Bell, but with less expression. She had a clear, fair complexion, blush-rose colour, small, pretty features, deep blue eyes and nut-brown hair, which she dressed with remarkable neatness.

Mrs. Bertie spent the night with Peregrine, and continued to do so through his illness, only leaving him at school-hours. Bell and Hetty were very much struck with her self-devotion, and Bell sympathized with

her with all the warmth of her fine, generous nature. Perry went on pretty well for a day or two, but then became very ill indeed, and was pronounced in danger. In his delirium he dwelt much on Charles's going in the 'Lively Peggy,' and fancied Miss Biddy had again forgotten her promise. He asked his mamma to repeat his prayers for him because he could not, and added, 'Mind you pray for a fair wind.'

Once he said he thought drowning could not be near as bad as measles—'just a gurgle, and all over.'

It made Mrs. Bertie very low to hear him ramble in this way, and she scarcely felt equal to her daily teaching. Bell offered to undertake it for her to the best of her ability, but she feared it might not be liked. 'If I take their money,' she said, 'I must do their work.'

One day Perry begged so hard to have his brig in the room with him, that Bell undertook to fetch it from the toy cupboard. The brig, it may be premised, was about the size of a writing-desk. When at the toy cupboard, Bell could not resist the opportunity of looking into his will, especially as she was to be his executor. She began at

the wrong end of the parchment-book, and was amused and touched at his having been at the pains of writing out the fabulous history of Martin Frobisher. Then she turned to the other end and read as follows :—

'This is my will and testament, but I don't know that it will be my last. I beg mamma to accept my best Prayer-book back again, and also the small Bible she gave me. I am sorry for the dog's-ears. I am very sorry I ever did anything she did not like, especially about going down to the quay. I didn't tell a story about the jam; I never touched it.

'I leave my two-bladed knife to Charles; one of the blades is very good: and also my penwiper that Bell made me, like a Union Jack. I am rather sorry I ever meddled with his sextant.

'I am not at all sorry I gave John Foxey a black eye, because he deserved it; he knows why. However, he may have my small boat.

'My large brig, "The Bell," is to go to Bob, of the "Lively Peggy," if he will accept it from a friend, though he will see many faults.

'Jane may have my old hymn-book, and all my copy-books.

'I have nothing to leave Bell except my love, but I do love her very much indeed, so I make her my executioner.—Your affectionate friend, 'PEREGRINE BERTIE.

'I believe there ought to be witnesses, but you need not let Mr. Foxey know that there are none; I may give away what's my own. If I leave any money, put it in the poor-box, please. That's my last will and codicil.'

'And a very good one too, Perry,' thought Bell, as she took the brig in her arms after replacing the log-book.

'How's the wind?' said he, when she returned.

'There is hardly any,' said she; 'but Biddy must have reached Portugal by this time.'

'Then I hope she'll have a fair wind to bring her back.'

And he pleased himself with imagining all sorts of adventures for Charles, till his mother told him he would make himself feverish.

From this time Perry steadily progressed, but he was yet a long way from recovery.

Their anxiety about him ceased, however. By this time a fortnight had passed, and they began to look for Miss Biddy. Another week passed, and still no tidings. Meanwhile the weather changed.

There had been a great lull, and then the wind shifted. It was now the latter end of September.

One night Bell was roused from dreamless sleep, by Peregrine's crying—

'Bell, Bell, it 's blowing great guns!'

And sure enough the casements were rattling, and the wind howling in the chimney, and the sea coming in with a roaring noise.

'Oh!' said he in great distress, 'suppose they should be wrecked!'

'O no, Perry dear, there 's no danger; the windows always rattle in this way when the wind blows. Our house is more exposed to it than yours, and so we hear it more; but we are used to it.'

'I 'm not used to it, though,' said he, in a doleful voice, 'and it makes me miserable.'

'Say your prayers, Perry dear. Say a hymn.'

'I can't remember one. I can think of nothing but the gale.'

'I will come then, and say one to you.'

And she left her bed, and went in to him, and repeated—

'God moves in a mysterious way
His wonders to perform;
He plants His footsteps in the sea,
And rides upon the storm.

'Ye fearful souls, fresh courage take,
The clouds ye so much dread
Are full of mercy, and will break
In blessings on your head.'

'That's heavenly,' said he thankfully. 'Good-night; I can sleep now.'

And he slept before she left him.

Next morning the shore was strewn with fragments, and the sullen sea was retreating with an angry, growling noise. Old mariners were wistfully sweeping the horizon with their glasses, and wishing they could make out the 'Lively Peggy.'

CHAPTER IX.

IT now behoves us to look after the 'Lively Peggy.'

As when a housewife, prudent in affairs, takes a general inspection of her premises, applies her various senses of seeing, smelling, touching, and tasting, to every mysterious liquid and solid hid under covers and in dark corners, drags forth unexpected hoards, and brings hidden things to light, so did Miss Biddy, before she heaved anchor, always make a point of investigating every corner and cranny in her brig, that it might conceal neither combustibles nor contraband. Once satisfied on this point, she cast care to the winds, and rejoiced in a wet sheet and flowing sail.

On the present occasion she would, if she had followed her own inclinations, have so far outraged all nautical precedents as to sail

on a Friday, because, as she said, they should then be well to sea on the Sabbath; but Beale looked so utterly blank at the idea of it, that she saw at once where the shoe pinched; and asked him, with a little scorn, on what day it *would* please him to sail.

'Why, of a Sunday, to be sure, if it's left to my choice,' said he; 'the best day of all the week; whereas we all know what happened of a Good Friday; and that has made every Friday since a bad one.'

'No, no, Beale, I can't have the Sabbath desecrated by putting to sea: I'll meet you half-way, and sail on Saturday.'

'Anything to please you, mum, it so being as we don't sail of a Friday.'

So on a Saturday they sailed, and it would be hard to say which person on board felt most satisfaction in seeing the distance increase between the brig and the little quay, with Bell, Hetty, and Peregrine waving their adieu.

Charles's predilections were so little for the sea, that he had seldom made his appearance on the beach, and was scarcely known by sight to the crew of the 'Lively Peggy.' His character, education, and predilections were still less known to them, so that he

made his appearance on board with almost the prestige of a stranger; and certainly his personal appearance was a letter of recommendation. He looked older than he was, and very sedate; was tall and well-grown; with fresh complexion, dark blue eyes, and curling, nut-brown hair. There was a kind of composure and self-assurance about him that made others think he felt master of the situation, whatever it was,—which indeed he generally thought himself, till it proved the reverse. As a youth who had had a thoroughly Christian training, he was at once humble-minded and high-minded; but send poor Charles afloat and he would be likely to find himself as much out of his element as a fish would be on dry land.

Beale took kindly to him at first sight, and responded to his first salutation with—

'Sarvant, sir. Them's pretty things as I ever set eyes on that you've in your hands. A rare good glass, I'll warrant, and quite a toy sextant.'

'This pocket-sextant was my father's,' said Charles complacently; 'he took the sun's altitude with it many a time.'

'And you know how to do so yourself, sir, I'll be bound.'

'Pretty well,' said Charles; 'you shall see me take a meridian observation by and by. Can you show me where to fix my barometer?'

'Ay, ay, sir; step this way; allow me to carry it for you, sir. You should have been a sailor, sir, aboard a man-o'-war.'

Charles did not quite like his patronizing tone, but yet he was pleased with him and desirous of his good opinion; so, as they placed the barometer, he dropped a scientific expression or two, just to let Beale see what was in him. Beale, however, said he was wanted aft; and Charles followed him, stumbling along, for he had not got his sea-legs. Miss Biddy had just been looking into Coles's chest, which Coles didn't like, as she had immediately espied a dirty pack of cards in it, and expressed her regret that she had not forbidden them as well as spirits and swearing.

'Well, Charles,' said she cheerfully, 'how are you getting on? You have brought some nice-looking instruments on board, I see. I should like to be taught the use of the sextant. My professional education has been too much neglected; or rather, I have myself to reproach for neglect of my oppor-

tunities; my father would gladly have taught me all he knew himself, poor man.'

'I shall be most happy, I 'm sure,' said Charles, 'when we get into rather smoother water. At present it 's rather rough.'

'Rough! we don't call *this* rough,' said she, laughing. 'What will you say when we get into the Bay of Biscay?'

'I suppose you know the Bay of Biscay as well as I know the coach-road to London?'

'On the contrary, I know very little of it, and nothing of the coast we shall run along.'

'Indeed!' said Charles, rather alarmed. 'Then I should think you had better keep very close in-shore.'

'The very worst thing we could do. We are safe enough as long as we keep well out to sea. When we get into port, you must rub up your Portuguese, Mr. Charles.'

'My Portuguese!' said he, looking rather discomfited. 'I 'm afraid that won't go very far.'

'Indeed! I am sorry to hear it, for I had reckoned on you as our interpreter. *I* don't know a word of the language, nor do either of my men.'

'Dear me!' cried Charles. 'Then really I think you had better go back.'

'Not to be thought of,' said she, laughing heartily. 'What should I do with my cargo? We shall manage somehow, you'll see.'

Charles thought the prospect somewhat disconcerting, but no improvement of it occurred to him.

Coles now came up, and demurely asked Miss Biddy for a piece of liquorice, saying he had a sore throat. She seemed very much inclined to look down it, seeing which, he hastily added that it was very low down, quite out of sight. On this she took from her pocket a tortoise-shell bonbonnière of ample dimensions, and produced from it a goodly lump. Seeing him look as if he thought he was to bite a piece off and return it to her, she said—

'You may have it all—we are going to the land of Spanish juice;' adding to Charles, as he moved off, 'It's surprising how fond that man is of Spanish liquorice.'

Coles no sooner got out of sight, however, than he substituted tobacco for the liquorice.

They were now running swiftly before

the wind, in a very pleasant manner; and after a desultory chat with Miss Biddy, Charles strolled towards Beale, and began to ask him the names of the ropes; observing, as he felt one of them—

'They must excoriate your hands a good deal.'

Beale replied that he was such a younker when his hands were first ex-scored, that they were all over scores now, and past feeling. He continued to talk about the ropes and their uses in a leisurely way, while Charles listened to him at first with pleasure, but soon with only feigned attention; for they were now getting among long rolling swells, that gradually carried them high up, or what he thought high, and then very suddenly down again; and this rather amused Charles with its novelty, till it produced very unexpected and undesired results, and—not to put too fine a point on it—made him extremely sea-sick.

'Dear me,' said he apologetically to Beale, 'I 'd no idea of being subject to anything of this sort; I 'm quite ashamed. I—'

'It 's a purwision of natur', sir,' said Beale stolidly, 'to relieve our systems, and show us what poor weak creatures the best on us

are, — crowned heads, and heads without e'er a crown to their hats, all alike.'

'I shall soon be better, I dare say,' said Charles. 'I—. Dear, dear.'

Instead of getting better, poor Charles got a good deal worse; and was so completely laid on the shelf by the inexorable demon, that he never held up his head again till they were in port. Miss Biddy could not help being a little amused, but yet she pitied him too; especially as he did not like succumbing at all, and was continually apologizing for what he could not possibly help. At times he thought he was really going to die, and rather wished it than otherwise; only he hinted that, in case of such an eventuality, he hoped his remains would not be thrown overboard.

'You really must rouse yourself and get well, then,' said she, laughing, 'for I 'm sure Coles would not sail with a dead man on board.'

He thought her very unfeeling to laugh, but directly they cast anchor he found himself all right, forgot all his late sensations, and was greatly excited and delighted at the novelty of the scene around him.

Miss Biddy soon found he knew almost

as little Portuguese as she did; or, if he did know any, it never came ready to hand, but, as she said, was stowed away at the very bottom of the hold. The chief use she made of him was as a live walking-stick. It was better for her to have a young man to go about with, than to play the part of unprotected female in a country of foreigners; though the helpless way in which he turned his blue eyes on her blithe resolute face whenever they got into a fix, amused, and sometimes almost provoked her.

After a little pushing and shoving about, they stumbled on an English skipper, whom Miss Biddy made friends with directly; and he readily pioneered her to the counting-house she wanted. There was an English partner, and an English clerk, about Charles's age; and while the English partner was very civil to Miss Biddy, and put her quite *au courant*, the young clerk gladly obeyed orders, and was civil and helpful to Charles. Soon Charles was planning with him an expedition to Cintra, and the young man told him how he might meanwhile best amuse himself, and offered to take him to the theatre, which, to his surprise, Charles declined.

His motive for doing so was twofold: first, on account of a scruple with regard to theatrical performances, and, second, because of *res angusta domi*, which possessed him of little to expend on amusement. There were pleasures to be had without cost on every side—lovely and romantic scenery, picturesque costumes, mingled with indescribable dirt and squalor. Being really clever in his way, though that way was not in the seafaring direction, he picked up a smattering of the language with surprising quickness, and carefully entered every thing that struck him with interest in his journal.

One day he showed Miss Biddy, with a complacent smile, a small stiletto, on which he had spent almost his last penny.

'O Charles, you must not have that!' cried she quickly.

'Why not?' cried Charles in surprise.

'The next thing to having it will be using it.'

'You don't think me such a child as that, I hope?'

'No, but—. Do let me have it, Charles. I 'll buy it of you; I don't like you having it. It isn't an English weapon.'

'That's true,' said Charles, 'but I bought it chiefly as a curiosity, and it might be useful in self-defence, for the fellows here out with them at a moment's warning, and without giving any.'

'Never mind their nasty ways; you've two weapons of self-defence provided by Mother Nature—a pair of good English fists.'

He laughed, and said—

'You may have the dagger, if you are so set on it, Miss Frobisher; I don't care much about it; but you must accept it as a present.'

'No, no, you may see something else you like and that I shall not dislike.'

Coles contrived to be on shore whenever Miss Biddy's back was turned, and picked up some English acquaintance who introduced him to more than one low posada; but Beale never left the 'Lively Peggy' while she lay in harbour, and he insisted on Bob's remaining on board with him, doing his best to scare him with stories of Portuguese assassinations and kidnappings. Twice, however, Bob, under the influence of Coles, slipped on shore; for which Beale rewarded him with a rope's-end when he came back, which turned him sulky.

They remained in port longer than Miss Biddy had counted on, though not very long after all, but it seemed longer to all parties than it was. At length her cargo was shipped, and the 'Lively Peggy' set her face homeward.

'Well,' said Miss Biddy, as she watched the receding Lusitanian shore, 'I 'm glad that I 've been, and I 'm glad I 'm on my way back again. I don't think I shall care to see Lisbon any more.'

'And I 'm glad to hear you deliver that opinion, mum,' said Beale, 'for it 's exactly the same as my own.'

'Why, Beale, you can hardly be said to have seen it at all, never once having been ashore.'

'Oh, didn't I though, ma'am, begging of your pardon for contradicting you. *I* see their nasty manners and customs through the glass, and without it too, and their nasty priests, and the people flopping down on their knees in the nasty mud to them, when they went along in broad daylight with lighted candles. And as for their handling of a ship's rope, why, I wouldn't trust them with the rope's-end I keep to polish off Bob with.'

Charles, to his surprise and satisfaction, felt no qualms now, and was able to keep his legs pretty steadily. As soon as they were fairly to sea, Miss Biddy found leisure for that strict investigation of holes and corners which even Beale did not like, and which Coles detested. After having conducted her search very satisfactorily over the brig without detecting any contraband, she retired to her cabin; whence she presently came forth, flaming with wrath, and holding a small package at arm's length.

'Come here, you men!' cried she, 'and you too, boy!—I don't ask who had the impudence to put this parcel of tobacco under my pillow—I don't ask who has had the audacity to go into my cabin *at all*, contrary to strict orders—I don't want to know—I 'd rather not know!—for we must sail in company to Hardsand, and I do not wish to fix it on any one with whom I am obliged to associate.'

'Well, I never!' exclaimed Beale. 'The awdacioust thing that I did *ever* hear tell of! To go and put a parcel of tobacco under a lady's pillow! That must have been *you*, Bob!'

'No, it worn't,' said Bob, surlily; 'where

was I to get the money to buy it? A likely thing!'

'If you'd a been a good boy, as it was your duty to be,' rejoined Beale, 'and never set your foot on that blessed quay, you couldn't have been suspectivated.'

'Why, who's to be suspectivated?' growled forth Coles, 'when we none of us knows nothing on it? You might be suspectivated yourself, Beale.'

'If you'd say that, you'd say anything, Coles,' retorted Beale. 'Maybe you'd suspect Miss Biddy!' with a sardonic laugh.

'Silence, men,' said Miss Biddy. 'It would be no pleasure to me to convict any one of you of a capital offence—a double offence, against me and the revenue. You've heard me say once already, that I'm glad I don't know who the culprit is. It shall be enough punishment for him, this time, to lose his property; but the next time such a crime is committed, I will either trace it home, or part with every man that receives my wages.'

Saying which, she went to the ship's side and launched the tobacco into the deep.

CHAPTER X.

CHARLES here approached Miss Biddy with an apprehensive face, and said,—

'Miss Frobisher, I think we are going to have a change of weather.'

'A change of weather, Charles?' said she, scarcely attending to him, and giving a pre-occupied glance around, 'O no, nothing of the sort. There are no tokens of it.'

She moved away from him as she spoke, and re-entered her cabin; feeling rather too much ruffled just then for any companionship.

Cut short in this quarter, Charles presently applied to Beale, who was moodily busying himself with some cordage, and said,—

'I'm afraid, Mr. Beale, we shall have a squall shortly.'

'Why so, sir?' said Beale, without even

troubling himself to look up; 'I 'm an old-fashioned sort o' hand myself, and don't know nothing of the last improvements. Maybe you, being a young gent of eddication, can tell me a new weather-sign or two.'

This was said with scarcely disguised contempt.

'Well,' said Charles, 'I can only say, and I believe there 's only need to say, that the barometer has fallen very suddenly.'

'Has it though, sir?' said Beale, looking up quickly, 'and what do you take that to portend?'

'It is generally found to portend a squall; but perhaps you won't believe a land-lubber.'

'Well, sir, I take it that, whether that name fits you or no, you 're a gentleman of truth, and have read what you say in some of our prints, which maybe came from the pen of some clever navigator. Do you suppose, sir, you 've good authority for what you say?'

'Indeed I do,' said Charles; and he gave him chapter and verse for it so clearly and undogmatically, that Beale, after turning it in his mind a little, thought proper to alter the brig's course and shorten sail.

Coles, who could not see the good of this, obeyed orders unwillingly, but they were given none too soon; for just as the changes were effected, Beale, looking to leeward, suddenly exclaimed, 'Here it comes!' and at the same instant the wind, rushing from an opposite direction, and cresting the waves with foam as it swept over them, caused the little vessel to reel for an instant and then spring forward on a new tack.

The sudden lurch of the brig brought Miss Biddy from her cabin to see what was the matter; and noticing the alterations that had taken place, she asked Beale the reason.

'Well, ma'am,' said he, with some emphasis, 'Mr. Bertie here out with his learning, and told us a squall was coming, and as his weather-glass is by one of the best makers, he tells me, I thought we might as well try if 'twere to be believed. And lucky for us we did, for we 'd no sooner tacked and taken in sail, than the wind veered.'

Charles looked pleased without being over-elated at the verification of his prediction, so that all sympathized with him as Miss Biddy thanked and praised him for bringing his knowledge to bear on the events of the moment. The wind was still so fitful as to

keep every one on the alert, and harmony and animation took the place of the late unpleasantness among the little community, which was already forgotten.

Towards dark it began to rain heavily, and between eleven and twelve it blew hard; but the little brig was under very snug sail, and weathered it well. Nobody closed their eyes in sleep that night, unless Charles and the boy at intervals, for sailor-boys are the same now that they were in Shakspeare's time; and though Charles had a solemnizing sense of danger, he was too little inured to watching to avoid occasional snatches of slumber. A tremendous lurch, however, towards daybreak, awoke him for once and altogether, and when, in the dim, uncertain light that seemed to come from the sea itself, he beheld Miss Biddy motionless as a figure-head, holding firmly by the mast, and facing the storm, he cautiously made his way to her side, and said,—

'I conclude we are in considerable danger.'

'Charles, my boy, I wish I had not brought you,' said she quickly.

'Why so? I 'm very glad I came,' said he, 'since I was able to warn you of this gale.'

'It may not make the difference of more

than a few hours though in our fate,' said she; but the howling wind drowned her voice, and she was not sorry he did not hear what she said.

'Suppose I bind you to the mast,' said he. 'You may be swept off deck.'

'No, I think not, but we may as well lock our arms round it.'

And this they did; the vessel heeling tremendously as the gale increased, and sometimes dipping her yards into water.

What an awful gale it was! It was often impossible to hear each other speak, or to see anything through the blinding spray. Yet still they drove before the wind, and if a special Providence really watched over them and warded off every evil, it may have been owing to the prayers of that unseasoned young voyager clasping Miss Biddy to the mast, and of the sick little wakeful brother at home.

As day broke on the cheerless prospect, the wind went down a little, and Charles, with every sense preternaturally strained, fancied he heard distress signals; but Miss Biddy, who, in the emotion incident to a supreme moment, spoke to him and felt for him as a mother to her child, said, –

'No, dear, it is only the wind blowing great guns; the waves often make that noise on a rocky shore.'

Here the sailor-boy called loudly from aloft—

'I see something on the lee-bow.'

'Lee-bow? what is it you see?' shouted Beale.

'I can't justly say,' answered Bob, 'but it's something black.'

'A boat, perhaps!' cried Miss Biddy. 'Charles, where 's your glass?'

Charles staggered away from her to fetch it, and presently returned. Meanwhile Beale roared, 'Is it a rock?'

'No,' shouted Bob, 'it's a boat—a boat adrift on the lee-bow!'

'Make for it, Beale,' cried Miss Biddy, as she took Charles's glass. 'I can see figures in it quite plainly; a woman as well as men.'

They were now all in the utmost excitement, straining every nerve to succour the unfortunate boat's crew, some of whom were standing up and waving their hats. They brought-to just to windward of them, and the boat presently came alongside, though the men had only an oar between them. There

were three sailors, a woman, and a child; they were all Portuguese, but one of the sailors knew a few words of broken English, and Charles's little vocabulary was put into requisition, which did not happen to supply him with many phrases that could be turned to present account. It was no good to say, 'I love milk, butter, and cheese,' to poor wretches who were in want of hot brandy and water, nor 'madam, sir, or miss, I wish you a very good morning.' But nature, the universal teacher, prompted Miss Biddy, without need of words, to do just what was wanted by these poor creatures, to give them food and shelter. As, however, the brig was not victualled for so large an addition to their party, especially for a lengthened voyage, it was speedily decided that the best way would be to get rid of them as soon as they could, either by putting them on board some other vessel, or if they had not the luck to meet one, to run for the nearest coast. Beale, by the language of signs, made out from the most intelligent of the foreigners that he could pilot them to the nearest port, which, therefore, he allowed him to do, and before many hours had passed they were running along shore. Having reached the

port in question, a boat put off and took the poor people on board, they expressing their gratitude in the best manner they could by sending on board a supply of water and provisions sufficient for the present exigency, before the 'Lively Peggy' again set sail.

Meanwhile the little world of Hardsand was full of conjectures concerning the fate of the brig, and scarcely a fragment was cast ashore without being handled and jealously scrutinized, to see whether it could reveal any grim secret. Many a weather-beaten face viewed Bell with sympathy and compassion as she came down to the quay, and anxiously questioned one and another; but with true kindness each assured her the storm had been nothing to signify—'the wind had been contrary, and might ha' blowed Miss Biddy out of her course, but that was the wu'st they were likely to hear of; maybe they should sight the brig afore dark.'

This somewhat allayed Bell's fears, but she could not satisfy Perry.

'Oh, they 're drowned, they 're gone to the bottom,' cried he piteously; 'I felt they would! I 've done nothing but dream of them night after night; and one night, when

I was wide awake, I heard Charles calling "Ahoy! ahoy!"'

'But Perry, darling, you *could* not hear him out at sea.'

'Don't people get warnings sometimes?' returned Perry. 'The sailors say they do. Sometimes, when fishers are lost at sea, their wives hear taps at their casements, and even see them looking through the panes. Mamma doesn't like me to hear of such things, but *indeed* they happen!'

'If Charles is your brother, Biddy is my sister,' said Bell, 'and you must not frighten me with such dismal stories, or I shall have no spirit left.'

'That's true,' said he, taking her hand and stroking it; and from that time, though he was always on the watch for news, he kept his forebodings to himself.

But, just at sunset one evening, there was a violent thumping at the door with a man's fist, and Perry almost screamed—

'Oh, see what it is!'

Bell required no bidding, but flew down stairs and threw the door open. There stood the handsome young sailor, Joel Sprent, his face shining with joy, as he cried—

'The "Lively Peggy" is coming in, Miss.'

'Oh, God be praised!' exclaimed Bell, clasping her hands. 'I 'm so much obliged to you, Joel.'

'I knew you 'd like to know,' said he, turning on his heel. She did not wait to hear him, but ran up stairs, exclaiming—

'Perry! Perry! they 're safe! the brig is coming in.'

Perry began to cry, for he was very weak; but the next instant he waved his handkerchief, and cried, 'Hurrah! hurrah!'

He was now sitting, wrapped up in shawls, at Bell's bedroom window, and, pressing his face close to the small panes, he strained his eyes to see the 'Lively Peggy' come in, absolutely devouring her with his eyes as she neared the quay, with what appeared to him majestic deliberation. He was the only one in the house, for Bell, Hetty, and Betty had all run off to the quay, and he could see his mother, with less youthful haste, taking the same direction.

'There 's mamma,' he murmured to himself; 'she longs to kiss Charles; there 's Captain Spinks hobbling along with all his might; there 's Mr. Foxey with his hands in his pockets. Mr. Craikie 's down there

already; he's saying something to Bell, but she doesn't attend to him. There's Miss Biddy! hurrah! There's Charles! hurrah! hurrah! How they are all shaking hands and kissing. Oh, how I wish I was down there! When *will* they come up? They don't seem at all in a hurry. I wonder if they know yet about my having the measles? Miss Biddy looks this way; I'll nod, but I don't believe she can see me. She *does*, I declare!' Here his head kept nodding like a China mandarin's. 'Charles looks just like a real sailor; oh, you happy, happy fellow!'

After what seemed to him an age of delay, though it was not really so very long, he could hear their cheerful voices drawing nearer and nearer.

'How those sisters love one another,' thought he, as he watched the two younger ones hanging on Biddy's arms. 'I think it would have been the death of Bell if Miss Biddy had gone to the bottom, but somehow she was never so frightened as I was.'

Then they reached the house, and he heard them coming in.

'Mamma! Charles!' cried he as loudly

as he could, 'do come up here, or let me come down stairs.'

Bell came up to him.

'O Bell, *do* let me go down! I 'm sure it won't hurt me—'

'Well, I don't believe it will, if I wrap you up in a blanket. Here 's Biddy coming up stairs.'

This was delightful; and when Miss Biddy kissed him and pitied him, and told him about their rescuing the boat's crew and setting them on shore, he was as happy as could be.

'Charles did have some adventures, then, after all,' said he. 'I thought he would! How glad I am; it 's next to having them myself. But I should not have known about the barometer, nor have had one to take with me, so it has all been for the best. I should have enjoyed it all, as much as he has done, perhaps more, but I could not have been as useful.'

Miss Biddy exchanged an amused look with Bell at the idea of Charles's usefulness, but she would not hurt Perry by hinting at his brother's general incapacity, except as far as the barometer was concerned. On the contrary, she said what a good thing it was

when people had their wits about them, and could turn their knowledge to account; so that Perry was under the pleasing delusion that Charles promised to turn out a good sailor.

Afterwards, when Miss Biddy went into her own room, he heard her tell Bell about her finding the tobacco under her pillow, and drew his own conclusions from it; but, like a little Solon, kept them to himself.

They all drank tea together, and Perry, carefully screened from draughts, had as pleasant an evening as any, in spite of his head aching ready to split; but at length, when Mrs. Bertie insisted on putting him to bed, he was not an unwilling victim, especially as he could not hear a word of what Charles was saying in a low voice to Bell, and Miss Biddy was talking of settling her accounts.

Perry, having now a mind at ease, rapidly recovered, and was soon well enough to go home; but he returned daily to take his lessons of Bell, between whom and himself there now existed a tender affection, and she would only have to bid him do a thing, for him to strain every nerve to do it. In fact there could hardly be a better boy; and as he found that it would have been much

better for Miss Biddy and Charles if they had been conversant with Portuguese, or even more ready with French, he set himself to get forward with his French lessons in a way that was surprising.

Miss Biddy had been heard more than once to say that it was less trouble to ship and unship a cargo than to get accounts settled afterwards; and so she said again after her trip to Portugal; however, matters were settled at last, and she found herself comfortably into pocket thereby. Meanwhile a great change was preparing for Charles; for his uncle, Captain Bertie, arrived at Portsmouth and summoned him to join him immediately. Charles hardly knew whether to be glad or sorry; he certainly was more ready to obey orders than he would have been before his trip to Portugal, and having always a tolerable opinion of his own competence, he had no misgivings of the judgment that might be formed of him on quarter-deck; but still his marine predilections were by no means so strong as to make him hail with joy the adoption of a sailor's life as a profession, nor did he like tearing himself away from Bell.

'You will not see me again for two or three years,' said he to her, plaintively.

'Well then, you will be older, and I shall be older when we next meet,' said she lightly.

'That's as true as that grass grows and the wind blows,' said Charles; 'the question is, *how* shall we meet next time?'

'A question that nobody can answer,' said Bell.

'But yet,' said Charles, 'I feel with regard to myself, that in some things I shall be found unchanged.'

'What sort of things?' said Bell.

'In my regard for you, for instance.'

'Oh, that's as may be. Perhaps I shall have done something to forfeit it,' said she, laughing.

'I hope not,' said Charles very seriously. 'I only wish I were as sure of you as I am of myself.'

'Would it not have been more modest and more polite to say, "I only wish I were as sure of myself as I am of you?"' said Bell.

'O Bell, don't be so cruelly unfeeling! I don't believe you care a straw for me.'

'Well, I really have never considered what I value you at, but it is best to take our friends' estimation of us for granted.'

'Shall you be sorry I am gone?'

'Sorry for your getting a good appointment? Why, that would be the reverse of friendly!'

'I mean, shall you miss me?'

'Yes, I daresay I shall, a little. Not enough to fret about, you know; but—oh, of course I shall miss you. So shall we all.'

'Thank you. Bell, I do wish you would give me one little, little lock of your hair?'

'Most certainly not!' said Bell. 'What ever can you be thinking of?' And she ran away, laughing at him.

CHAPTER XI.

CHARLES thought Bell did not mean to come back, and was troubled at so abrupt a parting, but in a minute or two she returned with a small book in her hand, and said gravely,—

'This will be more valuable to you than a lock of hair; and I hope you will keep it for its own sake as well as mine. Good-bye; I wish you well.'

She shook hands with him and went away; and with this leave-taking he had to console himself as he might. The present was a small copy of Mason on 'Self-Knowledge,' on the fly-leaf of which she had written 'From a Friend,' with his name and the date. He did not exactly like her choice; not being sure whether it were a hint that he was deficient in the knowledge in question.

'How dull everything is, now Charles is gone!' said Perry wistfully.

'Well, I daresay you do miss him a good deal,' said Bell. 'The best way is to fill your thoughts as much as you can with other things. Here is a piece of cloth that will make a famous sail for your brig.'

'Oh, jolly! How *is* it, Bell, you always know just what I want? When mamma has a piece like this, she says it will do for a shirt-sleeve.'

She smiled, and said, 'You want a thimble, Perry; you may have this old one. Sailors should know how to mend stockings and sew on buttons.'

At night, when the wind blew hard, he said, 'This is rough weather for those at sea, but Charley is not on board yet—what a difference that makes! I am sorry for the others, but not anxious.'

Miss Biddy had found it a hopeless task to induce her men to go to church when opportunity offered; Coles caring for nothing that was likely to be heard there, and Beale averring that a chapter in the Bible was as good as any church to him. She had her doubts on this point, especially as he spelt out a chapter with exceeding difficulty; but

as Hardsand was unfortunately singularly deficient in the means of grace, she was sometimes at a loss what to say to him. One Sunday evening she was much surprised to meet the old man posting along, hymn-book in hand, as if bent on church-going; and on her stopping to ask where he was bound, he said,—

'To the Bethel, to be sure, ma'am. Don't you know we have one? Sure-*ly*, it's the place where we get pure gospel.'

'No, indeed, Beale, I never heard of it before. Where is it?'

'In Oyster Alley, mum, just over agin the "Hope and Anchor." Harry Lawes set it afoot, beginning o' the winter, and it's just the thing for us. Oh, it's convincing, it is! Only last Sabbath, an awful backslider was struck down, convicted of sin.'

'Well, I don't exactly know what to think of it,' said Miss Biddy dubiously.

'Don't see as how you *can*, mum, since you've never been there, nor even heard of it.'

'I've a good mind to go there now, Beale, and see what it's like.'

'As for seeing, there's little to see,' answered he, 'and I don't say it'll come up to

your mark. There 's little to see and a good deal to smell. Herrings and onions do prevail uncommon, and likewise cheese. But it 's not the smell nor the sight, it 's the sound that allures us,—the sound of the Gospel trumpet.'

'Well, Beale, may not I like that sound as well as you ?'

'You may, mum, and you mayn't. You may like the trumpet well enough, but you mayn't like the way it 's blowed. Mr. Borage will conduct the worship to-night, and they do say he makes one's flesh creep.'

Miss Biddy stood undecided for a moment, and then said,—

'Well, I think I shall hear what Mr. Borage has to say.'

It was difficult to tell whether Beale was pleased or not; he fell off the path, and would have dropped behind, but she said,—

'You first, you know the way.' To which he replied,—

'Cert'n'ly, mum,' and trudged in advance, but still off the path.

Arrived at the corner of Oyster Alley, Miss Biddy was eyed curiously and in most instances recognised respectfully by divers old seamen and their wives on their way to

the Bethel. And it was a good thing for her that she did not in the least mind what might be thought by the public of her erratic course, for certainly it could not be hid. Oyster Alley was, as Beale had hinted, redolent of the fumes of dried and fried fish and other strong-smelling comestibles. In lieu of paving, it abounded in heaps of oyster-shells half pounded into lime by being constantly trodden on and stumbled over. There were also strong smells of tobacco and spirits: the small tenements, chiefly low lodging-houses or shops in the general line, were built without any uniformity, except that they were uniformly mean, dark, and ill-ventilated. Built on a steep slope, with every facility for drainage that a good fall could bestow, the perversity of the inhabitants made them negligent of the advantage, and their obtuseness made them indifferent to the trickling black stream that was checked here and there in its downward course by an old hat or shoe.

Beale turned through a low doorway and passage, across a poor court, and entered a sort of warehouse, which, for the nonce, served for the Bethel. Here Miss Biddy was for a short time the observed of all

observers, but in a grave, furtive kind of way, which was not very embarrassing. Presently a man in shabby black gave out a hymn, and forthwith a great many strong voices were about to burst into song, when they were checked by the minister's saying, 'Now I do earnestly entreat every one who cannot utter these words from the heart to be silent, as it would be mocking God with a lie.'

This, in Beale's phraseology, brought them short up; a solemn pause ensued, as well it might, and then one or two steady voices, gradually joined by most others, swelled forth in full, deep notes,—

> 'I will believe, I do believe,
> The Lord has pardoned me.'

Miss Biddy said afterwards that it really *did* make her flesh creep. Then came prayer, homely, sometimes too familiar, as it seemed to her, but very earnest—then more singing—the room getting hotter and hotter, the singing louder and louder. As for Beale, he swayed from side to side, keeping time with his head, evidently in intense enthusiasm. Then came the sermon; and what was the text? '*The door was shut.*' It may be easily imagined how an able, devoted man might

preach on it. He began very quietly—you might have heard a pin drop—very quietly, but that did not last long. 'He rose as the tide does,' said Beale afterwards, 'softly and softly, till at last it lashes and roars.' When it came to the roaring, a man in the centre of the meeting, suddenly fell down on his knees, overwhelmed with the thoughts presented to his mind, and cried in a thrilling voice, 'I've lived too long in sin for God to pardon me! I feel I have sinned away my day of grace!' (Immense sensation.) 'Don't believe it, old man, don't believe it!' cried the preacher, and the sensation increased. 'It is the devil who is putting these thoughts into your head; but he was a liar from the beginning, and he is now trying to make you doubt the willingness of God to save you.'[1]

He repeated to him the many encouraging promises of God's word, amid many stifled sobs and deep-drawn sighs, and at length the broken-hearted man seemed comforted; at all events he regained his self-control. By this time a fine invisible web of sympathy seemed drawing them all together, and every word the preacher uttered sank into the heart. Miss Biddy's attention was almost

[1] *Life of Henry Lyon, Musician and Street Preacher.*

painfully strained; at length, some passing allusion sent her thoughts off at a tangent, and when she recovered possession of herself, she found her head full of her drowning father and his last cry for help and mercy. Her eyes were blinded with tears.

It was quite dark when they left the Bethel; and, of course, Oyster Alley was not illuminated with lamps of any description; but more than one deep, kindly voice said, 'This way, mum; there's a roughish bit just here; sheer off a bit, mum.'

Her sisters were wondering what had become of her. She came in, fresh and glowing from the keen night air, and a little excited by what she had heard and seen.

'I don't say it's the best possible form of worship, even for sailors,' said she, 'but I'm sure there's a great deal of power, and a great deal of good in it.'

The way this Bethel had been opened was rather noteworthy. One afternoon, a poor, decent man with a harp on his shoulders, accompanied by a neat, respectable-looking woman, entered the town and took his stand near the quay. A harp being a very uncommon instrument in Hardsand, a group of bystanders speedily drew about him, and

stood open-mouthed while he uncovered and tuned his instrument. Instead of playing a waltz or ballad, he began a hymn tune, and sang,—

'The Lord's my shepherd; I'll not want—'

in a good barytone voice; the woman presently joining her treble. The audience increased; he sang two or three hymns, and then addressed the bystanders in a plain, earnest way on the subject of their salvation. One of them was Mr. Lawes, a shopkeeper, who had been meditating the opening a Bethel in his warehouse, and here seemed a man likely to assist him. He stepped forward and said,—

'My friend, you are telling us of things we would gladly hear more fully. My warehouse is at your service, and all those who like to hear you are welcome to come there this evening at seven o'clock.'

And this was the institution of the Bethel; which continued thenceforth to flourish, although it pleased Providence to remove the inefficient pastor of Hardsand that winter, and substitute an active, efficient minister in his place.

It was a winter of little incident, unless as

concerning a heavy gale early in the new year, in which many small craft foundered or had their bulwarks stove in, their masts or bowsprits carried away, and their sails torn to ribbons. A large smack, running before the wind under three-reefed mainsail and storm-jib, was struck by a heavy sea which carried away her bulwarks; and a few minutes afterwards, a second huge wave came down upon her like a mountain, with such force as to lay her on her beam ends. The captain and two men were washed overboard, and only two lads were left on board, who were with difficulty rescued by a boat's crew from Hardsand. Before the vessel righted she half filled with water, and her cabin-fittings were washed to pieces. The captain and his two men were seen no more.

On the following night, while the gale was yet blowing with full power, an object was visible only a short distance from the shore. The tide being scarcely half in, the crew on board the vessel were unable to run her in on the sandy beach, and, being ignorant of the locality, they turned her head to the rock-bound northern side of the little bay. The result was necessarily disastrous; all sail was hauled down, but in a few minutes

the vessel became unmanageable, and drove with fatal fury on the rocks.

All the seafaring population by this time were on the look-out, and many of them hastening to the cliffs. It was impossible to launch a boat. The vessel had heeled over and was rapidly breaking up; the crew appeared paralysed. Half-a-dozen seamen at length reached the shore, on spars and by swimming. They were instantly taken into the cottages and supplied with dry clothing and food. It was a Maltese barque of 400 tons, laden with Indian corn. The wreck was taken in charge by the agent for Lloyds, and, with the few articles saved, put up to auction the next day. The rescued sailors, all of them foreigners, were forwarded to Portsmouth, all but one, who was too much bruised and injured to move.

This man, whose name was Manuel, lodged with Beale and his sister, by whom he was most kindly treated. He could speak broken English, and many an hour did he hold forth on his nautical experiences to Miss Biddy and Beale, who sometimes understood him and sometimes not.

'The longer one lives,' said Beale to Miss Biddy, 'the more one feels the advantage

of knowing a mort of lang-iddges. We're slow to believe it at first, and many's the whipping a young gent gets afore he'll take kindly to his French and his Latin: but oh! the advantage it is to him arterwards; even if he *be* rather awk'ard with his fingers. See what a rise Mr. Charles took out on us with his Portugee; and maybe he knows summat of Maltee.'

Perry, who was standing by, stored up this saying of his oracle's, and resolved to apply himself more zealously than ever to his lessons. So it is no wonder he got on, though without either competition or compulsory instruction. He was a very happy little boy at this time, industrious, but by no means overworked; finding his greatest recreations in things that had generally something connected, however humbly, with practical seamanship. To help to paint an old boat, or even an old tub—was felicity to Perry; he put his whole soul into every stroke of the brush, and now and then stepped back to contemplate his work, with the serene satisfaction of a Stansfield.

'Bell, *have* you a little turpentine handy? I 've smeared my trousers a very little bit, and mamma said if I spoilt my clothes I must

leave off painting. I should be sorry for that, it *is* so jolly. Would *you* like to come and do a little bit? If you would, you shall.'

'No, thank you, Perry, I 'm not so fond of the nasty smell of paint, nor yet of spoiling my clothes. There, I 've done the best I can for you, but your mamma will smell it out.'

'Not if I keep in the open air a good while, perhaps?' said Perry doubtfully.

She shook her head and laughed.

Bell never missed an opportunity of indirect teaching.

'Perry,' she said one day, when they were on the beach together, 'I am going to give you a navigation lesson.'

'Hurra, Bell! now for it.'

'On second thoughts, I shall give you a resuscitation lesson.'

'What 's that?'

'You shall know. Bring that log of wood here.'

'Well, here it is.'

'That represents a body.'

'A what?' said Perry, opening his eyes.

'A drowned body.'

'Quite dead?' said he, awe-stricken.

'No, we will hope not. We are going to try to bring him to. What shall we begin with?'

'I can't think.'

'There's a pretty answer! Much the drowned man is obliged to you. I'm glad I'm not him, that's one thing.'

'Yes, Bell, but what *should* be done?'

'Coles' grandfather would have said, "Tie him up by the heels, to let the sea-water run out of his mouth." But recollect, Perry, *that* is never on any account to be done.'

'No, I should think not.'

'Proceed we then. Here we behold the insensible form of a shipwrecked mariner, whom we will call Sam Sponge. Now then, Peter, Bob, and Harry,' cried Bell with sudden vivacity, addressing herself to sundry imaginary individuals, 'run off as hard as you can to bring dry clothes and blankets from the nearest house. Joe, don't stand stupidly staring, fetch some men to help us, call for the doctor, bring him back with you, and also some smelling-salts and snuff.'

'Snuff!' ejaculated Perry.

'Now then, Perry, let us lift him very gently, and turn him face downwards. Stay, you must loosen his clothes first. Gently,

gently; now we 'll turn him over, putting his right arm under his forehead to support it.'

'But he hasn't an arm.'

'This stick represents it. There, poor fellow, his mouth is no longer full of water. Wipe his lips with your handkerchief; leave his tongue a little outside his mouth. Now we must try to restore breathing. What shall we do?'

'I 'm sure I can't tell,' said Perry.

'Sam Sponge has a poor chance of life then,' said Bell. 'Come, let me see if I cannot do something for him. Let us turn him on his side. Here comes the boy with the snuff; we 'll try him with a little. No, he can't snuff it. Support his head a little. We 'll try him with the salts; we 'll tickle his throat with a feather. No; it 's no use.'

'Dead and gone,' said Perry.

'No such thing,' said Bell. '*You* wouldn't like to be given up so soon. Dash some water on his face.'

Perry ran off, and really fetched some, which he dashed on the imaginary Mr. Sponge.

'That 's no good, seemingly,' said Bell. 'Then, Perry, we must produce artificial

breathing. Now, attend very closely to my directions, or we shall have Sam Sponge's life to answer for. Let us again gently turn him on his face; take off your jacket, fold it up, and put it under his chest. Now, we 'll roll him very gently on to his side, then briskly back on his face, about fifteen times in a minute.'

Perry thought this very good fun, and did his best to 'fool her to the top of her bent,' by imitating her feigned seriousness.

'Do you know how this produces artificial breathing, Perry?' said Bell, after they had rolled Sam Sponge to and fro several times, sometimes on one side, sometimes on the other.

'No, I can't think,' said Perry.

'By placing him on his chest, the weight of his body forces the air *out;* by turning him on his side, the pressure is removed, and the air enters *in.*'

'Oh, I see! But will that bring a dead man to life?'

'He's *not* dead, I tell you. At least we won't give him up yet. His life may be very valuable to his family; or if not, it may be very important to him to live a little longer and repent of his sins.'

'Oh, then, we won't give up yet.'

'No, no, many a man has been restored, after seeming dead for hours. Every time he is turned on his face, press him gently below the shoulder-bones, firmly and quickly. If *this* doesn't do, we must try Dr. Sylvester's method.'

'What is Dr. Sylvester's method?'

'Never mind, we shall not want it. See, he's beginning to breathe! Give him a teaspoonful of warm water, somebody! afterwards a little warm brandy and water, still with a spoon. Now, Perry, assist the sailors to take off his wet clothes, and put on dry ones. If you cannot manage that, roll him in blankets.'

'Oh, we'll manage it,' said Perry, laughing. 'How are you, old Sponge?'

'Hush, he's in a very anxious state still,' said Bell. 'We must rub him gently, and apply hot bottles.'

'Out on the sands?'

'No; now we have brought him into the nearest cottage. Tell all the idle people to go away, he must have quiet and fresh air. He has had enough brandy and water now; we have put him in bed, and tucked him in. Well, Perry, do you think you

shall know now how to treat a drowned man?'

'Yes, in a general way, but is that the real way?'

'The real and best way; but how much do you remember of it?'

He laughed, and tried to recollect, but made several blunders.

'O you bad boy,' said Bell, 'lie down on the sand this minute and let me give you a good rolling as if you were drowned.'

'That will be no punishment, only fun,' said Perry; 'but this is good play, Bell, for it has some use in it—hasn't it? And if we have it every day, I think I shall know it quite well by the time I get a drowned sailor.'

'Do you wish for one to practise on? What a shame!' said Bell.

'What was Dr. Somebody's method, that you spoke of just now?' said Perry.

'Oh, we will not puzzle ourselves with too many methods at once; that will do for another time. I have it all at full length in this crumpled piece of newspaper.'

'Is *that* where you found it? What a girl you are!' cried Perry in admiration.

Afterwards she told him how the Emperor Alexander of Russia had learnt the rules of

our Humane Society, and applied them to a poor Russian peasant who was supposed to be drowned. Long after everybody else gave him up for lost, the Emperor insisted on persevering in their efforts; and when at length the poor fellow sneezed, the Emperor said it gave him greater pleasure than any sound he had heard in his life.

'So you see, Perry, it is a good thing to learn such things at our leisure, that we may apply them when there is need.'

'Yes,' said Perry. Then, after a pause, he squeezed her hand, and said very softly,—'If Captain Frobisher had been thrown ashore where people knew these rules, he might have been alive now, perhaps.'

'Ah, don't speak of that,' said Bell very sadly. 'He was never thrown ashore.'

Perry was now looking forward with intense pleasure to Miss Biddy's next trip, which would be to Havre, for he was to be her companion. She kept her word and took him: it was a prosperous, uneventful voyage, much enjoyed by every one on board, except Coles, who was not fond of children, and thought the young gentleman in the way. Perry soon found this out, and attached himself the more to Beale and Bob, who

were always glad of his company. Sometimes, in the still hour of evening, he would suddenly raise his voice, sweet as a lark's, and sing in such a joyous, wild kind of way, without any particular words, that Miss Biddy thought 'that boy is an angel!' and Beale was almost ready to cry, seeing which, Coles the unsympathetic was ready to tip the child overboard.

They shipped a cargo of linseed, which made a great dust as it was poured into the hold. As Perry dusted himself with his little handkerchief, Miss Biddy said,—

'I suppose you think linseed nasty stuff?'

'No,' said he, 'I think everything's interesting that belongs to the—profession. What a number of poultices it will make, to be sure!'

Presently he observed, 'I wish Coles would not scold Bob so. He has done nothing wrong, and all the hard work is over; we have nothing to do just now but to run before the wind and enjoy ourselves.'

'A sail flaps most violently in a dead calm,' said Miss Biddy, 'and Coles is readiest to quarrel when he has nothing else to do.'

'Yes, I suppose that must be it,' said Perry.

As they approached Hardsand, their attention was drawn to a boat, some distance off shore, in the stern of which, according to Perry, sat Captain Spinks. Miss Biddy was so intent on making him out, that she did not immediately perceive the 'Alert' revenue cutter rounding the point and bearing down on the 'Lively Peggy.' A new revenue officer named Hawke had lately been appointed, who was said to be uncommonly sharp.

Apparently Beale was rather put out by the approach of the cutter, for he called twice very sharply to Coles, who seemed troubled with sudden deafness. He was obliged to hear at length, however, and sullenly prepared to go aloft and make some alteration directed by Beale in the rigging.

As he unwillingly slung himself up, Perry, who continued to hang over the side, plucked Miss Biddy by the dress, and said in his artless voice, clear as a bell,—

'Please, will you tell me, Miss Biddy, what that is, hanging low down at the side of the brig? almost touching the water? It wasn't there before.'

A heavy coil of rope fell from Coles' hand

on the poor little boy's head, and, for the moment stunned him.

'O Coles! what did you do that for!' cried Miss Biddy in indignation and grief, catching Perry in her arms. 'Come down this minute; you've nearly killed him.'

'Why now, was there ever such a nasty, blackguardly thing done in this world!' thundered Beale.

'Let the brig follow her own course then,' growled Coles, leaping down; 'just as if I done it on purpose! Little masters had better hold by their mammas' aprons than come aboard to be in everybody's way and get men into trouble;' saying which he hastily made to the spot whence Perry had just been making his observations. Miss Biddy and Beale regarded him with surprise and displeasure, but at the same instant they were boarded by a boat's crew from the 'Alert;' and the officer, slightly touching his cap, said, 'By your leave, ma'am, we guessed something of what was going forrard, and came alongside just in time,' with an ironical smile.

'I can't tell what you mean,' said Miss Biddy, who still had her arms round Perry. 'You don't suppose I carry contraband?'

'I do suppose though, there's a pretty heavy package of tobacco slung over your brig's side,' said Hawke; 'and, moreover, a boat in the offing hovering to pick it up.'

'Tobacco?' cried Miss Biddy, thunderstruck; and, with a vengeful 'Now, Coles!' she ran to the side and looked over to see—where it was not.

'It's gone!' cried Perry, with his hand to his head, eagerly looking over, 'it was there just before.'

'Yes, it's gone to feed the fishes, that is,' said Hawke, grimly; 'but here's more behind. What say you to these, ma'am?' ferreting out sundry packages from a dark corner. 'Your own eyes will tell you, from the way these are packed and stowed, with ropes attached to the outer covering, that they were meant to be thrown overboard.'

'Well, I never!' ejaculated Beale.

'No, you never—were caught before, master!' said the revenue officer mockingly.

'*I?* I'd no hand in it,' said Beale, 'I'd scorn such a dirty thing; I wash my hands of it.'

'You'll consider yourself under arrest, though, all the same,' said Hawke, 'and you too, Coles. I seize this vessel.'

Perry set his teeth closely together, and the tears came into his eyes.

'O Coles,' said he piteously, 'why don't you speak out, and clear Beale?'

'A pretty thing to ask of a man,' said Coles, hoarsely. 'You go along with you!'

His look, black as thunder, was fiercer than his words, and silenced the little boy, who held Miss Biddy's hand fast clasped.

'Am *I* under arrest too?' said she with outward contempt and real anxiety.

'By your leave, ma'am, in consideration of your known character and your sex, and the unlikeliness that a woman, the cleverest born, ever *could* know what goes on aboard her own vessel, I don't mean to restrict your personal liberty.'

'Well, Mr. Hawke, I 'm obliged to you for saying so, circumstances considered, though all Hardsand would be up in arms had you attempted the opposite course; but I am as indignant as you can be at this attempted fraud; much more so, I am outraged, amazed; for it was in absolute disobedience to my orders, and my vigilance is such that I cannot conceive even now how it has been managed.'

'Quite believe you, mum — impressive warning—which will maybe induce you to prefer the privacy of domestic life ashore. Rather an expensive lesson to you, too, for I expect you 'll lose your brig.'

Miss Biddy's face became deep red; but she only returned Perry's squeeze of the hand, and said in a strongly controlled voice,—

'Never mind, Perry, my boy, it will all come right, you 'll see.'

And in this comfortable state of affairs the 'Lively Peggy' came ignominiously into harbour, and her men were marched off under guard, and Miss Biddy, with tears that would start and need to be brushed away, had to walk through the little crowd of the sympathetic and the curious that always attended her landing; holding and almost dragging Perry along, he looking like a little hero at bay.

Bell and Hetty, as usual, came rushing down with beaming faces, but they slackened their pace directly they came in full view of their sister, and approached her with surprise and anxiety.

'What 's the matter, Biddy? has anything gone wrong, dear?'

'Only that the brig has been seized, with contraband on board!'

They exchanged looks.

'Oh! then that's—'

'Hush, don't name names. It will all come out. Justice must be done. Mr. Hawke has had reason.'

They walked home sadly, almost in silence. Perry felt his lot was cast in with theirs, and that he bore his portion of unmerited obloquy. It was grave and exciting, and rather grand.

And such a nice tea as the girls had spread! And Mrs. Bertie was just on her way down to meet her darling Perry. As soon as they came up to her, they began speaking very fast, and rather unconnectedly; it was a great relief. They all went in and drew close together round the tea-table; but nobody could eat much, or notice what they ate; they were full of the one great trouble, the seizure of the brig.

CHAPTER XII.

NEXT day the posture of affairs was worse rather than better. Mr. Craikie had commissioned Miss Biddy to bring him over a sofa and six chairs he had bespoken at Havre. It seemed an odd place to send to for upholstery; and so, perhaps, Mr. Hawke, the revenue officer, thought, for inspirited by the capture of 260 lbs. of tobacco, he prosecuted his researches even into the stuffing of the sofa and chairs, which, to his glee, proved to be entirely stuffed with tobacco and cigars.

Of course Mr. Craikie asserted the innocence of a lamb, and of course nobody believed him. There were plenty to suspect Captain Spinks, but there was nothing whatever to prove against him. Mr. Craikie had the effrontery and bad taste to call on

Miss Biddy to talk over 'this sad business,' but she cut him very short, and told him she wished she had seen him farther before she had undertaken to let his sofa and chairs come aboard her brig. He assured her, shrugging his shoulders, that nobody could be more sorry than he was; even a breath of suspicion against a man in his business was so damaging; to say nothing of the loss of his goods.

'I should think so, indeed!' said Bell abruptly. He gave her an inquiring look, and prolonged it into a stare, thinking that her raised colour made her even handsomer than usual.

Mr. Craikie had never enjoyed the best reputation, but smuggling had not hitherto been actually brought home to him. There was not one believer in his innocence now; some mocked, some pitied him, some were honestly disgusted.

Though he found himself an unwelcome visitor, Captain Spinks had not equally forfeited the privilege of the *entrée*. He took up his lamentation for the loss of so much good tobacco without disguise or shame.

'All those pettifogging revenue officers, mum, that deserve to be tarred and feathered.

There's something corrupt in high quarters, mum, that permits this mean peeping and prying into private persons' affairs. Is not an Englishman's house his castle, mum? and if so, why not his brig? Here are you, an innocent lady, made an object of surveilliance to Gov'ment, and actually taken up before you are down,—boarded before you can run your goods,—and is *this* proper governmental conduct to a lady?'

'I don't take shelter under my sex,' said Miss Biddy. 'What's wrong in a man is wrong in a woman, whether smuggling or anything else, and I think a lady who smuggles lace or gloves, or, in fact, any prohibited article, no matter how trifling, infringes the laws just the same as a man who smuggles tobacco.'

'Just the same, mum! I never heard a thing clearer stated. And it so being that we know *any* lady born would smuggle lace, gloves, silks, or any trinkets whatsomever, that pleased her fancy, without the least hesitation or sense of wrong, why, it stands to reason there *is* no wrong, mum! Ladies do it every day, and laugh at it. And as you truly observe, what's not wrong in a woman, isn't wrong in a man.'

'You 've twisted my words and mistaken my meaning, Captain Spinks.'

'Beg pardon, mum, those was your very own words, I appeal to these young ladies. Was not my remark on them, the very moment they were uttered, that I never heard a thing better stated? What's good for the goose is good for the gander, is sense all the world over; and when I find you, mum, surprised at the force and extentuation of your own words, you remind me of a celebrated character in my early days,—a gentleman in the pay of Gov'ment, who spoke with great heat against smuggling at some public meeting; and was mopping his face under the warmth of his emotions, when a neighbour slyly said, "Allow me to look at your pocket-handkerchief—ha! as I supposed! a Bandana!"'

Bell and Perry laughed heartily at this story, however little to the point, being entertained by the racy roguery of his manner; and he, well pleased at their merriment, nodded and smiled at them both, as much as to say, 'You see I have taken the whip-hand of her.'

'It was all Coles' doing, *I* know,' said Perry.

'Not proven,' said Captain Spinks authoritatively; 'not proven. Did you see him do it, young gentleman?'

'No; but—'

'No *but* in the case. Not proven. You must never go and say a man's guilty if you can't prove it. That's against the English constitution, as the Act directs. Remember that all your life, I advise you.'

Perry looked impressed, but mystified.

'Look here now,' said Captain Spinks, resolved to improve his advantage; 'you don't believe Beale done it, do you?'

'No, I 'm sure he didn't.'

'There 's no *sure* in the case. You believe he didn't.'

'Yes, that I do! I 'm quite certain.'

'Very well. And I 'm quite certain Coles didn't. *Now*, where are you? What's good for you, is good for me. If you may be certain-sure, I may be certain-sure. That's law and reason, all the world over.'

Perry concluded that it was; but he did not give up Beale for all that.

After Captain Spinks was gone, Miss Biddy sat painfully thinking.

'What's the matter, Biddy dear?' said Bell.

'The matter is, what shall I do if the brig is seized?' said Miss Biddy.

'Get a new one,' said Perry eagerly.

'Easy to say, dear. Where's the money? Besides,' added she after a pause, 'I don't see the good of continuing in the trade, if an honest person using the utmost vigilance is liable to frauds like this.'

'But it was only Coles,' put in Perry, looking up from his lesson-book. 'If you get rid of him, it will all go right.'

Miss Biddy did not seem to attend to him; and Bell whispered, 'Mind your lesson, Perry dear. Little boys can't understand affairs like these.'

Perry thought they could; but did his best to obey orders.

Hetty suddenly said, with great determination, 'If your business is done up, Biddy, *I'll* be the one to work. You've worked hard for us this long while.'

'Hetty! that's very nice of you,' said Miss Biddy, brightening. 'But don't say I've been working for *you*, my dear; I've been working to pay my father's debt.'

'Yes, that as well as the other,' said Hetty, 'but you've done both. And now I'll have my turn. I mean what I say.'

'Hurra!' said Perry softly.

'It's not in the power of circumstances to make us very unhappy,' said Miss Biddy, 'when we are so united among ourselves.'

No more came of Hetty's proposal for a time, but she did not lose sight of it. During the early part of the year a great feeling of lassitude and depression, not to say discontent, had come over her, accompanied by a vain desire for change. Miss Biddy had been sorely puzzled what to do with her; she thought she required rousing, but that it must proceed from herself. Hetty fretfully said she did not see how she was to rouse herself; she went through her daily round already, and did everything as well as she could. She had lost her pleasure in her ordinary work; what was it all for? and was one day to go on like another all her life? No, she didn't want a voyage; the sea always made her ill; she didn't mean to complain of anything; she never *did* complain, but she owned she was sick and tired of things as they were. Miss Biddy tried a little scolding, but that only made Hetty cry, so she soon desisted from it, and rather regretfully let things take their course. A journey to

London with a nobleman's housekeeper for her only fellow-traveller, enabled Miss Biddy to talk over her sister's case with her companion, who seemed a good motherly woman. Mrs. Mellon thought that the young person wanted change of scene, of faces, and of occupation. 'It was just so,' she said, 'with Lady Harriet two years ago; and, oh! what sums of money she cost my lord before she came round! Change of place was easy for the great; she was taken hither and thither, and was always hankering for home; and what cured her after all? why, an infant school! She got the lodge-keeper's and coachman's children to come to her every morning in the stone summer-house at the end of the bowling-green, and used to teach them first, and play with them afterwards, till she forgot all about herself and quite recovered her health. And your sister might do something like it—go out into a family, and get something for her pains, even if there 's no need for her to work; we all find plenty of uses for our money. Why, there 's old Madam Grunow, getting quite past work, and dozing while Lord Harry is learning the multiplication table and saying his collect. A nice, healthy, lively young person would

be a deal better companion for him, and teach him twice as much.'

Miss Biddy repeated the substance of this to Hetty on her return; and Hetty seemed to think she should like well enough to be with titled people, and hear a Lord Harry say his collect; but the fancy soon faded away, and when her sister asked if she should look out for a situation for her, she declined, and said she knew nothing well enough to teach — and had no mind for teaching.

Now, Hetty's sudden resolution surprised and pleased Miss Biddy, and she truly felt what she said, 'It is not in the power of circumstances to make us unhappy.'

Some weeks elapsed before the fate of the brig was decided. When the parties were examined, there was so much prevarication, recrimination, and flat contradiction, and such frequent use of the name of Master Perry, that Master Perry himself was brought forward, and gave his evidence with the solemnity of a man of sixty. When he said he had seen 'something heavy' among the linseed, and that Coles had said it was 'ballast,' Coles growled, 'That I didn't!' and Perry rejoined, 'You *know*, Coles, you

did!' with his blue eyes fixed firmly on him.

The end of it was that Beale was cleared, Coles was sentenced to imprisonment, and as Miss Biddy's character testified highly in her favour, she was not ruined by the forfeiture of her vessel; but as the Commissioners of Customs had reason to believe this was not the first evasion of the law of which it had been the instrument, they imposed a fine of £200 before releasing it from detention.

Miss Biddy, without one word of complaint, took instant measures to sell out as much stock as would cover the penalty, and *thus* went the greater part of her savings towards paying her father's debt! No matter; the 'Lively Peggy' was hers once more; she could trade with it again, and experience would make her wiser. Instead of trying, by sleepless vigilance, to keep a suspicious character from offending, she would take care to have no one on board that needed suspicion. In place of Coles she took Joel Sprent, and began to make preparations for a fresh trip.

The day after the fate of the brig was known, Mr. Craikie called on Miss Biddy,

and after some beating about the bush, expressed his hope that the fine would not much inconvenience her.

'Of course it will inconvenience me,' she said; 'but I make no complaint. It would inconvenience me much more to do anything dishonourable or shabby.'

'I am glad to hear it will not straiten you,' said Mr. Craikie, 'because—in fact, my object in calling on you was to say how glad I should be to advance the money to you, if it would be of the least convenience.'

'Thank you, Mr. Craikie, but there is no occasion for it. I can draw out the money without being beholden to any one; and I am never fond of laying myself under pecuniary obligations.'

'But, to an old friend like me—a sincere well-wisher,' pursued Mr. Craikie, who would not immediately relinquish the subject; and Miss Biddy wondered how long and strongly his cheap generosity would have been pressed on her, had he not learnt at the outset that she was in no want of it.

Various little economies were agreed on between the sisters, though they would make a very trifling set-off against the fine. But Miss Biddy was really straitened for ready

money just then, and as she was earning none it was expedient to save.

At this juncture she received a letter from Mrs. Mellon, the housekeeper, whose noble master had just succeeded to a marquisate and splendid estate. Lord Harry had been taken out of his German governess's hands and put under a preceptor, who had succeeded, in an incredibly short time, in putting so much knowledge into his head that he had nearly driven all the sense out of it. To save the child from pressure on the brain, absolute rest was prescribed; he was to be sent to a quiet country seat under charge of some unexceptionable young person, who should do nothing but play with him and amuse him.

'On this being made known to me,' pursued Mrs. Mellon, 'I thought at once of your sister, and named her to my Lady, who puts such confidence in me that my recommendation always goes for much. In short, she is willing to make trial of Miss Hetty, and if she prove suitable, to give her twenty-five pounds a year.'

This put Hetty into a great flutter, and her sisters were almost equally stirred by it. Miss Biddy thought the opening too good

to be rejected; Bell did not at all like the idea of losing Hetty; but Hetty herself was anxious to go, and did not seem to lay much stress on the separation. So, after debating the matter throughout the day, a grateful acceptance was forwarded by the evening post; and Hetty's outfit was immediately taken in hand.

Bell, since she could not keep Hetty from going, did her best to assist her with her ready fingers, and smothered many a sigh as she silently worked. There seemed a dead weight on her heart; she could not, for pity, tell Hetty of it, for she did not wish to cloud her prospects for an instant; and she got no adequate sympathy from Biddy, who said,—

'We have been casting about for a change for her, and here is one free of expense. Not only that, but I am relieved of her charges just when I am obliged to draw in; not only that, but she will have a nice salary, that will be very acceptable, and give her a comfortable sense of usefulness. She will have a wealthy home and a light task.'

All very true, and Bell could not for shame dwell much on her own loss, except in her heart. But with Biddy on the point of

another trip, the prospect before her was dull and lonely enough; and though Biddy said, 'You must be a good deal with Mrs. Bertie,' and Mrs. Bertie said how glad she should be to have her, Bell felt that she would not make up to her for the loss of her sisters.

One morning, while they were all at needlework, Mr. Craikie called; and though he begged he might not disturb the young ladies, they gathered up their work and left him with Miss Biddy.

'I have called unseasonably, I 'm afraid,' said he; 'you are all so busy.'

'We are always busy,' said Miss Biddy. 'Women generally find plenty to do.'

'Report says Miss Hetty is starting on a visit,' said Mr. Craikie.

'She is going from home,' said Miss Biddy, biting off her thread.

'For some time, may I ask?' said Mr. Craikie.

'Quite uncertain,' was her answer.

'Miss Bell will feel lonely in her absence,' he resumed, after a pause.

'Bell will miss her, no doubt, but she will be constantly with Mrs. Bertie.'

'My present subject is Miss Bell,' pursued

he, with a little hesitation. 'I may say, not only my present subject, but object. So acute an observer as yourself may have remarked before this that I have long had her in view.'

'Well, you certainly sit opposite to her in church,' said Miss Biddy.

'To survey her is to admire her,' said Mr. Craikie; 'and, in short, I don't hesitate to say to you, Miss Frobisher, that my intentions are serious.'

'Intentions, Mr. Craikie!'

'Matrimonial intentions, Miss Biddy. I intend to offer her my hand and heart.'

'You cannot be serious! a girl scarcely eighteen.'

'Oh, pardon me, I 'm quite serious. Her age is no objection; I think her quite old enough.'

'But the disparity, Mr. Craikie!'

'Well,' said he, evidently hurt, 'I don't think that would be cast at me in any other quarter. Many people would consider me in what is called the prime of life—at any rate the meridian. There was a greater disparity, Miss Frobisher, between Miss Bell's mother and your father.'

'The cases are so different.'

'In what material point? Your step-mother was young and handsome; Miss Bell is young and handsome. Your father was a widower, I am a widower. He wasn't over rich, I am very well to do. He was between forty and fifty; I am scarce forty. And as for looks, Miss Biddy — comparisons are odious, but *he* was bald and weather-beaten, and *I*—look at least the gentleman. I believe most would give me the advantage.'

Miss Biddy did not, but there was no need to tell him so. She began, 'This subject is so unexpected;' but it was not. She began again, 'This subject is Bell's affair rather than mine.'

'Precisely,' said Mr. Craikie. 'May I solicit your kind intervention?'

'To tell you the truth, I've no mind to part with her.'

'Oh, let us hope that reluctance will be overruled,' said he in a studiously modulated voice.

'No, I do not think it; at least for some years.'

'But you yourself said it was her affair, not yours.'

'Just so; but—I don't believe you will find her inclined to listen to you.'

'Some other preference,' said he, with a sharp, quick look.

'Nothing of the kind; I don't believe she wishes to change her condition at present.'

'Ladies always say that at first,' rejoined he. 'Just give me the opportunity of putting it to herself. I surely may claim that much?'

'Surely. If you wish to speak to her now, I will send her to you. Only don't be much disappointed if she does not accede to your wishes.'

'We'll see about that,' said he, drumming on the table. She left him, and went in search of Bell.

CHAPTER XIII.

'I CAN'T go down—I sha'nt,' said Bell, with disgust, when she heard what was expected of her.

Hetty looked extremely amused; and Miss Biddy, smiling, said, 'But you must. I said you would. It must come, soon or late, and you had better have it over.'

'I'd sooner have a tooth drawn,' said Bell.

'Nonsense; I'm sure you wouldn't. And the longer you put it off, the worse it will be. Mr. Craikie will think you are dressing for him.'

'Rather than that, I'll go at once,' said Bell, starting up.

'Ay, do. Now mind, Bell, what you say.'

'Of course I shall say "No."'

'Some girls have said "No" before they

were asked,' said Miss Biddy mischievously. 'Mind you don't do that.'

'Of course I shall not.'

'What I was going to say to you was, don't say "No" unkindly or rudely. You may be equally firm, and still civil.'

'I 'm always civil.'

'And he is paying you a sort of a compliment—what he means and thinks as such.'

'Why, Biddy, he 'd better have proposed to *you*.'

'Hush! remember walls have ears. Come, don't waste time in nonsense. Remember our house is his, and don't affront him.'

'Oh, well, if you care for the house more than for me—' said Bell, very gloomily; and she went down with a cross expression on her face, which it very seldom wore. If Mr. Craikie had been a physiognomist, he would have seen, the moment she opened the door and stood before him, that the fates were against him; but he was so pre-occupied with imagined success, that he only thought she looked very handsome and rather 'high,' a kind of dignity not unsuitable to the circumstances, and which became her well.

He rose, made a little bow, and attempted

to place a chair for her; but she took another, and looked at him with gravity.

The time had not seemed long to Mr. Craikie while left alone, for he had been running over various forms of address, any one of which he thought quite adapted for the purpose; but now not one of them came to mind. He was obliged to scrape his throat and flick himself with his glove; and then he said, 'I 'm sure I 'm obliged to you, Miss Bell, for this attention.'

'What attention?' said Bell.

'Your complying with my wish for an interview.'

'I complied with my sister's wish,' said Bell drily. 'She told me you had something to say, so I came to hear what it was.'

If any speech would have cooled a man's ardour, this would; but Mr. Craikie was not repelled.

'I have already disclosed my intentions to Miss Frobisher,' said he, 'and she referred me to you.'

'What intentions do you mean?' said Bell, colouring very red, to her intense disgust, since it prevented her seeming unconscious.

'Your confusion assures me that you

guess,' said he, with an air of gallantry that made him more odious in her eyes than ever. 'I lay myself and fortune at your feet.'

'Pray do nothing so uncalled for, Mr. Craikie,' said Bell. 'We are very well off, thank you, and want no fortune but our own.'

'You *will* misconstrue me,' said he, drawing nearer to her; 'but, in plain English, since you will have it so, I wish you to be my wife.'

'Your wife!' repeated Bell, flashing fire at him with her black eyes. 'Why, you 've *had* one already.'

'I hardly need be reminded of that,' said he; 'but time repairs all losses, and— your own father married twice.'

'I had no voice in that matter,' said Bell, 'but I have in this; and— I am not partial to widowers.'

This was an objection which occurred to her on the spur of the moment.

'Oh, well, I only want you to be partial to *one* widower,' said he lightly. 'Indeed that 's all I could allow of. I 'm very exclusive on delicate matters.'

'I can't in the least see what that is to me,' said Bell.

'The plain question is—here am I, offering you my hand and heart, and— will you have me?'

'Most certainly not,' said Bell, rising. 'Why, Mr. Craikie, only think of our ages! I am young enough to be your daughter.'

'Eighteen is a very pretty age,' said Mr. Craikie, 'and I assure you I think nothing of the disparity.'

'But *I* do,' said Bell, 'and I must say that if you wanted any one of us, I wonder you overlooked Biddy.'

'Come, come, Miss Bell, you can be very smart, and a little stinging; but I consider that I have as much right as any man living to look for a little youth and beauty. Miss Biddy is a *leetle* gone off.'

'You wound me by speaking disrespectfully of my sister,' said Bell, 'and I think we had better end this uncomfortable interview. I thank you for what are doubtless your good intentions, and beg leave to decline them.'

She then turned to go; but he placed himself before her, and said,—

'Your objections?'

'I don't see that I am obliged to state any,' said she impatiently.

'Pardon me; I think, in common courtesy, I may claim them.'

'Oh, very well, Mr. Craikie,' Bell said rapidly. 'I dislike talking of marriage, I don't like widowers, I don't like your age, and I don't like *you*.' The moment she had said it she felt she had been rude; but she was in no humour to retract or soften.

Stiffening into rigidity, he looked keenly at her for a moment; and then said in a constrained voice,—

'Are those your real feelings, Miss Bell? are those your unalterable sentiments?'

'My unalterable sentiments; my real feelings,' said Bell.

'Then I 'm sorry I 've wasted my time,' exclaimed he, trying vehemently to force his hands into his new gloves, 'and I wish you may not repent it. But you *will* —I know it as well as that you stand there. You 'll *never* have such an opportunity again —never! Who are you, Miss Bell, permit me to ask, that can command good offers at your wish? There is not a single eligible match for you in the neighbourhood! More than that—if there were dozens of young men of the kind your fancy paints, you might look and long for them in vain, for

they 'd never have you, because you haven't a penny! It is not every affluent man, I can tell you, that is ready to please his eye at the expense of his purse; and that 's what I 've just had an escape of, madam! You 'll probably die an old maid, along with your sisters, for all your good looks; and you 'll remember my words and regret their fulfilment!—I wish you a very good morning!'

Purple with passion, and almost inarticulate in his utterance, he stumbled over the foot-stool and hurried out of the house; swinging down the gravel walk, and banging the little white gate after him. Miss Biddy and Hetty who had heard his raised tones, and leant over the banisters to catch something of what he was saying, ran down to Bell directly he was gone, and found her white and cold with emotion.

'What an escape!' were her first words; and directly she spoke, she began to cry.

'Never mind, dear,' said Miss Biddy soothingly.

'What in the world did he say?' cried Hetty.

'At first he was as fulsome and sleek as ever he could be; but directly I gave him

my plain answer, he threw off the mask and showed himself in his true colours. Oh, what a bad nature that man has! Biddy, you would not have me in his power?'

'Certainly not,' said Miss Biddy. 'I only wished to avoid making an enemy of him, if possible.'

'It was not possible, Biddy. He would have been our enemy soon or late. He is his own enemy. Such bitter, taunting things he said! They didn't hit the mark, that's one comfort! Think of his aiming to vex me by saying I should die an old maid!'

'So low of him!' said Hetty.

'Just as if I should mind it!' said Bell. 'Just as if I thought a woman's remaining unmarried made her contemptible! I think just the reverse. I think it is the weak, silly creatures who marry for a position, or just because they cannot say "No," that are contemptible.'

'You are over-exciting yourself,' said Miss Biddy. 'He was disappointed and angry, and said what came uppermost. I wonder you mind it so.'

'I didn't mind it a bit till he dragged you and Hetty in, and said I should be an old maid along with my sisters.'

Biddy burst out laughing.

'Just as if *he* could tell!' said Hetty, annoyed. 'Perhaps none of us will be.'

'He said there wasn't another match for me,' said Bell.

'And that is not your fault, surely,' said Biddy.

'How does he know you will always be here, any more than I shall?' said Hetty. 'Perhaps *your* change may come soon.'

'I don't want a change,' said Bell, sighing. 'I want nothing but to go on comfortably just as we are,—or just as we were before you settled to go away. Now we are once beginning to scatter, I don't suppose we shall ever be a united family again.'

'My dear Bell,' said Miss Biddy, 'do, pray, shake off your low spirits, or we shall all have the dismals.'

'So I will, then,' said Bell. And by a violent effort, she turned her attention to the dress she was making for Hetty; and in a little while was able to think of it and of other indifferent things without any effort at all.

The next time she met Mr. Craikie, she looked down with uncomfortable consciousness, and thereby escaped seeing his rude,

fixed stare. The same afternoon, Miss Biddy received a curt, formal note from him, announcing that he was going to raise her rent.

'There, girls!' said she, throwing it to them, 'that's what comes of Bell's declining to be Mrs. Craikie.'

'I'm very sorry, Biddy dear,' said Bell, 'but I'm sure you would not have liked such a brother-in-law.'

'No, I don't think I should; but really this rise in the rent is an awkward difficulty, and quite unreasonable.'

'Revengeful,' said Hetty.

'Whatever the motive may be, we must take it or leave it.'

'*I'll* pay the difference, Biddy!'

'*You*, child, out of your twenty-five pounds a year? Very likely you will need to spend it all on yourself; and I don't know that these grand folks pay their dependants quarterly.'

'Dear me, I hope they do!' said Hetty.

'I hope so too,' said Bell. 'Otherwise they will be very shabby. Why should rich people have credit that we don't allow poor ones?'

'Because they *are* rich,' said Biddy. 'Having plenty, we conclude they can be trusted.'

'Money and trustworthiness are different things though,' said Bell.

'Indeed they are,' said Biddy. 'However, the grand people Hetty is going to are rich, and trustworthy too, so she need not be afraid of her salary, though she may not get it every three months.'

'How curious it will be to say, "My Lord," and "Your Lordship," to a little boy of six years old,' said Hetty complacently.

'Perhaps they will dispense with it.'

'Oh, I hope not.'

Mrs. Bertie here came in, and on hearing that Mr. Craikie had raised the rent, and considerably too, she called it immoderate, and said it was mean and shabby of him—only done out of spite.

'Don't give in to it,' said she, 'don't yield. He won't get that price of anybody else.'

'But what are we to do for a house?' said Miss Biddy.

'What do you want with one? Yesterday it was a burthen to you. Hetty is going, you are going, you do not like leaving Bell in it by herself, nor locking it up.'

'But we *must* have some place to hold our things, and we *must* have a home when I come back.'

'A place for your things may easily be found. Smithson's two rooms would hold them all. Lock them up there, and leave Bell with me till you return. *Then* you can look about for a little house about the size of Mary Gray's.'

'That would be a great come-down,' said Hetty.

'I don't care for the come-down, much,' said Miss Biddy. 'I care for paying my way without incessant wear and worry. A house is a great burthen when it eats up half one's income—which this would, on Mr. Craikie's terms.'

'You'd feel so stuffy, Biddy, in Mary Gray's!'

'Besides, her house is not in the market.'

'No, but it will be when she marries,' said Mrs. Bertie.

'What shall I do?' said Miss Biddy, after a pause.

'Don't give in to Mr. Craikie,' said Mrs. Bertie.

'No, don't,' said Bell, stoutly.

Miss Biddy looked wistfully from one sister to another.

'If I write him a carefully worded letter, perhaps he will come round.'

'Men never come round, Biddy. At least Mr. Craikie won't.'

'Well, we'll try.'

So she set about her letter, and they were all silent while she was writing it.

'What have you said, Biddy?'

'"DEAR SIR,—I much regret that you propose raising the rent of this house to a sum which will prevent my renewing my lease. I think, on consideration, you will see it is beyond its market value. Some addition, in proportion to my means, I should be happy to pay."'

'It will be of no use,' said Mrs. Bertie.

Nor was it. Mr. Craikie replied he was sorry to disoblige Miss Frobisher, but that in fact he wanted to have the house in his own hands, and did not therefore regret that she declined to renew her lease.

'What a dog in the manger!' said Hetty. 'What can he want with two houses?'

'He doesn't want two houses; he wants to vex us. And it does vex us. But never mind, girls. We chiefly care for the house for family reasons. *You* will have homes of your own, soon or late, in spite of Mr. Craikie's opinion; and my real home is the

brig. I care much less for the house than for the "Lively Peggy."'

She at once engaged two rooms to warehouse her goods; and by the time quarter-day arrived, the furniture was moved into them and the house-key sent to Mr. Craikie. Hetty had started for Warrenne Castle, Bell had taken refuge with Mrs. Bertie, and Miss Biddy set sail on a new trip. Just before she did so, she received through Mr. Foxey a bill for dilapidations.

CHAPTER XIV.

'She has a fair wind,' said Perry, looking up into Bell's face, as they turned from watching the brig, 'but somehow she does not seem to start as cheerfully as usual.'

'No, she does not,' said Bell, 'but perhaps all may come right, nevertheless. "He that now beareth good seed, and goeth on his way weeping, shall doubtless come again with joy, and bring his sheaves with him."'

'And Miss Biddy has seed on board,' said Perry, 'and she didn't quite cry, though her mouth twitched a little.'

'Perry, you must be a wonderfully good boy while she is away, and make up to me for her loss.'

'I 'll try.'

'Run on, now, and look for some shells.

I would rather sit still a little while and think my own thoughts.'

He nodded and ran off, and she sat down on an old mast. Her thoughts were vague and melancholy. Life did not seem to her a very happy thing. What was it made up of? Work, or want of work, useless longings for change, or unexpected and unpalatable changes, no great events, but plenty of little disagreeables, longings and anxieties for the absent, that made the present seem importunate and uninteresting. But God gives us this life; and when it lies on us like a weight, we may only be too thankful it does not crush us down; at times it is joyous and gladdening enough; and oh, how it rises in value when we are likely to lose it!

Bell undertook her daily round and common task with steady resolution; her life might be joyless, but she would not let it be useless. 'I am not making money, like Hetty,' she thought, 'but through Mrs. Bertie's generous kindness I am saving money—saving Biddy the expense of my keep. I have great need to be very grateful to Mrs. Bertie, and to be as useful and pleasant to her as I can.'

She was very useful and very pleasant to

her, and Mrs. Bertie found herself amply rewarded for her genuine kindness. Perry got on better than ever, for he was reaping advantage from Bell all day long, and she said she would not change him for a dozen Lord Harrys.

'No, to be sure,' said Perry, laughing, 'because then you would have to teach twelve instead of one.'

Mrs. Bertie and Bell had long talks after Perry went to bed, and Bell was the confidante of her early troubles and struggles. She was touched with the story of her love-match, the details of which she now heard for the first time; and she liked to hear all her friend could tell of the Berties — at second-hand, for Mrs. Bertie had seen none of her husband's family. Old Sir Peregrine seemed from her account the incarnation of family pride and cold-hearted obstinacy. Hugh Bertie, the clergyman, appeared a kind of modern George Herbert; but she spoke of Captain Peregrine Bertie as very severe.

'Charles says there is no pleasing him,' she said. 'He cannot get on with his uncle at all. But I tell him to put up with as much as he can, for it is the only line in

which his uncle can or will help him. Poor Charles, he is not fond of the sea. But we are too poor to yield to likes and dislikes. People talk of ruling passions; but many of our greatest men have distinguished themselves in pursuits that were by no means their own choice. If we were all to follow our own bents, this would be even a stranger world than it is. Ask boys, What would you like to be?—it 's extraordinary what odd answers they will give you. One would like to ride the winning horse, one to be an actor, one to be a keeper of wild beasts, or to drive four-in-hand.'

They always thought differently on this point — Bell believing in first loves, first friendships, and early predilections; Mrs. Bertie being for duty before inclination.

One morning, when Mrs. Bertie was engaged with her pupils, and Bell with Perry, there was a man's firm tread outside the window, followed by a smart rap at the door. It was a common thing for Bell and Mrs. Bertie to answer the door at any time, when it happened to be convenient, and when they were unlikely to receive a formal visitor; and as Perry was in the midst of a long column of figures, Bell,

instead of saying, 'Open the door, Perry,' did so herself.

On the doorstep stood a gentleman in naval officer's undress, whom, in an instant, she guessed to be the man he was, though totally unlike her preconception. He gave her a quick look, and for a moment seemed unable or unwilling to speak. She said, almost involuntarily,—

'Captain Bertie?'

Perry sprang at the same moment to her side, and grasping her hand stood looking eagerly at the stranger.

'You know me, then?' said he. 'Surely you cannot be my sister-in-law? No, I beg your pardon; I am sure you are not.'

And embarrassment heightened the vivid colouring of his handsome face.

'I will call Mrs. Bertie,' said Bell. 'Pray walk in.'

He bowed, and complied. She instantly retired; and Perry, looking admiringly up at him, without a bit of fear, said,—

'Are you my uncle Peregrine?'

'Who are *you*, my fine fellow?' said the Captain.

'Your nephew Perry,' said Perry. 'I 'm so very glad to see you.'

'Why should you be?'

'Because you're Captain Bertie. I've often thought what you must be like.'

'I hope I answer your expectations.'

'Quite!' said Perry emphatically, which made Captain Bertie laugh.

'Who was the lady who was here just now?'

'Bell. Miss Bell Frobisher. She's mamma's dearest friend—and mine. She teaches me ever so many things. She teaches me all I know.'

'Navigation, astronomy, and so forth?'

'No, I wish she did!'

A pretty close examination of Perry's acquirements followed. This handsome uncle was by no means the terrible Turk he had been imagined, but he was a man of great determination, had a hasty, though generous temper, and, on occasion, could be both stern and severe. He was habitually strict.

Meanwhile Mrs. Bertie was in the greatest trepidation on hearing of his arrival.

'What on earth can he have come for?' said she. 'I had no idea he had landed. Ten to one he has come to complain of Charles. And he has never seen me, and

he is prejudiced against me. O Bell, how can I go in to him ?'

'I don't think you need be afraid,' said Bell.

'But my hair is rough, and my cap is dirty, and I must wash my hands. Go to him, dear, and talk to him till I am ready.'

Instead of this, Bell poured out water for her, took out her best cap, brought her a clean pocket-handkerchief, and having expedited her toilette, told her cheeringly that she looked quite nice.

'And don't be afraid of him,' repeated she. 'Remember that first impressions are everything.'

Mrs. Bertie looked rueful, as much as to express that in that case her chance of pleasing was very small. She quickened her pace, for fear he should be angry at her keeping him waiting; but Perry was amusing his uncle very much by the artless, fearless way in which he told him how he longed to go to sea, how he had been a trip in the 'Lively Peggy,' how he should like to go on board a ship of war, etc. When Mrs. Bertie entered, their two heads were close together, and Captain Bertie looked up smiling; but he grew grave as his eye

fell on her black dress, and he met her with seriousness and politeness.

'I must introduce myself, Mrs. Bertie,' said he, holding out his hand. 'You are surprised to see me, I dare say.'

'I *am* surprised,' Mrs. Bertie said with constraint. Her tone instantly put them on formal terms; what a pity, when Bell and Perry had smoothed the way so nicely!

'I only landed on Monday,' said he, taking up a paper-knife that lay near him, and playing with it mechanically. 'I at first meant to write to you, but on second thoughts I considered it might be best to see you.'

'Nothing the matter with Charles, I hope?' said Mrs. Bertie.

'Charles is the person I want to speak to you about. He'll never do for the sea, ma'am! In the first place, he's too old.'

'That is not Charles's fault,' said Mrs. Bertie with a little spirit. 'I sent him to you directly you asked for him.'

'But I did not suppose him so old; I had forgotten when he was born.' The dialogue was already becoming antagonistic.

'My husband wrote to inform his family when I was confined, I know,' said Mrs. Bertie.

'Dear me, ma'am! Sailors have a pretty deal more to do than to copy all the family register into the first leaf of their Bibles!'

'The family took no interest in any of our concerns, I well know,' said Mrs. Bertie, with a tear in her eye, 'unless in my poor husband's death.'

'Don't say "unless,"' returned he in a much softer tone. 'We were all sincerely sorry for poor Charles's death.'

'I should never have guessed it,' said Mrs. Bertie, crying.

'Come, come, we will not renew old grievances. What I was going to say was exculpatory. I sincerely mourned for my poor brother, and determined that directly I could help one of his boys I would. At that time I was only second lieutenant, and could do nothing; that is,' rather hesitating, 'I might have sent a little money now and then out of my pay, and wished to do it, but I didn't know how you might take it.'

'I should have taken very kindly *any* expression of friendly feeling from any of you,' said Mrs. Bertie, 'for you cannot tell how acceptable the smallest token of sympathy from the family would have been. But I should have been sorry to straiten you in

the manner you speak of, though we were often very straitened ourselves.'

'I lament it; I feared it might be so,' said he; 'but, you see, my brothers and I were fettered.'

'Your brother Hugh has been *very* kind to Charles,' said Mrs. Bertie.

'And that brings me back to my subject, ma'am; he'll *never* do good on shipboard! It's no use putting his name on the books. He has such thorough inaptitude; he's so stupid, so awkward, and worst of all, the young dog's so conceited! What's the matter with *you*, my man?' turning suddenly on Perry, whose cheeks were scarlet.

'I don't like to hear my brother found fault with so,' said Perry intrepidly; 'least of all to mamma. Besides, Bell says we shouldn't speak ill of the absent.'

'Perry!' said Mrs. Bertie, 'go out of the room directly.'

'No, let him stay,' said Captain Bertie. 'I like his spirit. Do you know, my little chap, that the first duty of a sailor is obedience?'

'And if I were a sailor I'd practise it,' said Perry. 'Only try me,' laying his hand on his uncle's knee.

'You are too young and too small, my boy.'

'You said Charles was too old.'

'Yes, but how many years are between you?' said Captain Bertie, laughing. 'There, run away now, and don't fire up when I am telling your mother unpleasant truths. That 's a fine little boy, ma'am,' as the door closed on Perry. 'If Charles had his spirit, now, and his predilection for the profession, he would make a good sailor. He 's not even fit for a chaplain! a desk in some house of business would suit him best. Or, suppose Hugh takes him in hand again. You were speaking of Hugh just now. Hugh will do anything he can, out of pure Christianity. I 'll write to Hugh, and wait for his answer before I return Charles to you.'

'*Must* he come back, then?'

'Like a bad penny. I daresay there 's good in him, though not of a sort that I can turn to any account. Let us hope he will make a better figure in some other calling. Anything I *can* do, I will do—I won't forget him. And now, Mrs. Bertie, don't let us say any more on this unpleasant subject, but try to improve our acquaintance. I 'm sorry I 've made it so late.'

'I should always have been glad to see something of you, Captain Bertie; but your family was always so distant.'

'Well, my father, you see, is peculiar—very peculiar. And he's proud, too; very proud. So you see that kept us apart. It was a family question. He wanted his son to marry for connexion—to make a grand match. Personally, he must have been charmed with you, I 'm sure, if he had ever had the privilege of seeing you—but, you see, connexion was his strong point, and he couldn't get over the want of it.'

'I 'm sure I think the Berties, of all people, need not want that. They 've enough for themselves and others.'

'Precisely what I think, only my father didn't. And he's a man nobody can turn. So the end to me, you see, has been that I have forsworn marriage altogether. I didn't care to displease him by my choice, and his choice would have displeased me.'

'But you're quite in the prime of life still, Captain Bertie.'

'But the case remains unaltered. It's a dead lock. Charles's marriage made disturbance enough in the family, though I 'm sure he had great excuse. My ship is my

wife—now I have one. But I was long overlooked. Directly I could take Charles on board I sent for him. Well, I'm glad to have seen you, Mrs. Bertie,' rising as he spoke.

'Won't you dine with us, Captain Bertie?' faltering.

'Ordered my dinner at the "Crown." By the way, since you are so kind, I'll tell them to send my dinner over here, that I may have the pleasure of your company. May I take such a liberty?'

'Oh, certainly! I shall be delighted,' said Mrs. Bertie, much relieved; for in truth the poor woman's hesitation had been caused by her doubt of being able to prepare him a suitable refection.

'Very well then, so let it be,' said he cordially. 'I'll tell them to send it over, and my friend Perry shall take me a walk meanwhile, and show me the wonders of Hardsand. Hallo, Perry, my man!' opening the door and calling aloud.

Perry flew to obey the welcome summons, and in another minute they were posting off to the inn. Mrs. Bertie drew a deep sigh of relief; and hurried away to Bell.

'Well?' said Bell with interest.

'My dear Bell, what a man! Such a complete Bertie, and so extremely handsome! When I went in, I was so struck by the likeness that I thought I should have dropped. But his manner is not a bit like my dear husband's. Much more imperative and imperious. Professional, no doubt, but rather intimidating to a lady. And he came to complain of Charles. I was sure it was for that! He says he'll never do for a sailor, and he's going to return him on my hands. What a sad thing, Bell, is it not?'

'That depends,' said Bell. 'Charles has never taken kindly to the profession; and perhaps something may turn up.'

'Captain Bertie says he will not forget him. And I believe, Bell, he has a kind heart under all that downrightness. He said he had felt his poor brother's death deeply, and I almost think his eyes glistened—I'm sure his voice altered. And he said he had longed to send me a little assistance out of his pay, but had not known how I might take it. That was very delicate and thoughtful of him; but oh, how acceptable a little assistance would have been!'

'It speaks well for him to have thought of it.'

'And, my dear, he's coming to dinner!'

'To dinner?' repeated Bell. She knew pretty well the state of the larder, and was in trouble for her friend.

'Yes—he had ordered his dinner at the "Crown;" but when I asked him — you know, I thought I must, as he was my husband's brother, but I did it trembling—he said he would tell them to send the dinner over here, that he might enjoy it in my company. That is excellent, is it not? because it will be sure to be what he likes to have.'

'Excellent,' said Bell; 'and Perry and I can dine up here.'

'That must not be thought of,' said Mrs. Bertie. 'You are my guest; and he is quite cordial with Perry; and the more the merrier. You and Perry will help to prevent dead pauses.'

'Oh, I shall hold my peace,' said Bell.

'And Perry will talk nineteen to the dozen,' said Mrs. Bertie, 'unless you keep him in check. Nudge him now and then.'

'O yes, I'll keep him within bounds,' said Bell, smiling; and, in truth, she was well pleased at the expected addition to their little party. She helped Mrs. Bertie to set

the table; and just as the ducks and green peas had arrived, Captain Bertie and Perry returned from their walk in famous good fellowship and good spirits, and declaring they were very glad to see dinner on the table.

CHAPTER XV.

CAPTAIN BERTIE, seated at Mrs. Bertie's right hand, carved the ducks splendidly; Bell, opposite to him, often met his bright, quick look and gay smile. Peregrine, at the bottom of the table, helped the potatoes with a becoming sense of the responsibility of his office.

'I say, uncle—' he was beginning, when he suddenly stopped short.

'You speak, yet you say nothing,' said Captain Bertie.

Perry nodded at him expressively, as much as to imply that he had some cause of silence.

'Little boys should be seen and not heard,' said his mother. 'Perry is accustomed to a rather too indulgent listener in Miss Frobisher.'

'There is something very provocative of

inquiry in that name,' said Captain Bertie to Bell. 'Are you descended from the famous navigator?'

'Our belief rests on tradition rather than proof,' said Bell, 'but we always *have* believed it.'

'He was of Yorkshire extraction, if I remember right? but I had fancied his family was extinct.'

'You *must* be of his family,' began Perry, 'because—'

'Because what?'

'*May* I, Bell?'

'Yes, you may finish the sentence.'

'Because of the picture.'

'He means,' said Bell, laughing, 'because we have an old portrait of an old commander, which we hold to be a picture of Sir Martin Frobisher.'

'Probably it is so. Oral tradition holds good, where no other evidence is to be obtained. I shall look on you as a direct descendant of Sir Martin till I have proof to the contrary.'

'Thank you,' said Bell, looking pleased; and Perry gave her a speaking glance of satisfaction, though without uttering a syllable.

'It seems to me,' said Captain Bertie, 'that instead of over-indulging a certain young person, you use a pretty tight curb.'

Mrs. Bertie and Bell smiled; Perry did not perceive the application.

'He minds her at a word or a look,' said Mrs. Bertie, 'but her rule has not been acquired by severity.'

'Hum—*I* am accused of severity now and then,' said Captain Bertie. 'How is it to be dispensed with, Miss Frobisher?'

'Generally speaking, I think people may be firm without being severe,' said Bell.

'Not always, though. I 'll give you an instance.' And he related a somewhat shocking occurrence in the West Indies, where an innocent person was under suspicion, and would have been punished, but for severe measures adopted by the commanding officer, which led to the detection of the right person.

'Some would die, though, rather than tell,' said Bell.

'But not be flogged—beyond a certain number of lashes—I 'm averse from flogging, generally speaking, but there are cases in which nothing else will do.' And he cited a case of a soldier in the Peninsular War,

which may be found in the life of Sir Charles Napier.

These stories made Perry grave and rather pale. 'Do such things happen often?' said he in a low voice.

'Not often; but oftener than they should.'

'One might avoid punishment though, if one meant always to do right,' said Perry, 'as I mean to do.'

'If one always *did* right. Doing and meaning to do are widely different things.'

'And if that bad sailor had held out, the innocent one would have been punished after all,' added Perry.

'We must all take our chance of that. We must all take our chance of false accusation occasionally; and trust to our known general good character. It strengthens us. Does not St. Paul say, we must "endure all things?"'

'Did he mean sailors?'

'He meant everybody.'

After a good deal more desultory talk, which Bell and Perry thought delightful, Captain Bertie said he should go down to the beach and smoke a cigar. Perry, in spite of warning frowns, immediately asked if he might go with him. His uncle looked fixedly at him, and said,—

'Well—yes;' to his immense joy; so off they set, leaving Mrs. Bertie to recover from a nervous headache, and Bell to think over again all that had been said. She was recalled to more prosaic matters by Mrs. Bertie's anxious inquiry whether they ought not to have a cake of some sort for tea. Bell, considering that Captain Bertie had given the dinner, said 'Yes' with decision, and received the pleasing commission to go and buy the nicest one she could. She had a distant glimpse of Captain Bertie and Perry sitting on an old boat, and was sure that Perry was talking with all his might, while his uncle, probably, only seemed to listen to him.

Tea was a very pleasant, chatty meal, for their intimacy had ripened wonderfully; and perhaps it was owing to the infusion of a little green tea that Mrs. Bertie's nervous headache quite left her. There was still a pleasant summer evening before them, and Captain Bertie proposed a walk, saying he had noticed a piece of fine smooth turf on the castle-hill, quite suitable for a seat for ladies.

They all sallied forth to the spot, where they sat till it grew quite dusk, talking in a

leisurely way of one thing and another, with pleasant intervals of silence. Perry amused himself with hunting for marine specimens, which he brought from time to time to exhibit. Once he coaxed Bell to let him show her a sea-blubber. Captain Bertie said, in her absence,—

'Is that young lady your governess?'

'O no; O dear, no!' said Mrs. Bertie. 'I am quite too poor to afford one, even if I wanted such a luxury. Perry says his lessons to her for love; she is a very dear young friend.'

'She keeps him well in hand,' observed he. 'As well as if she were paid for it. Better, perhaps.'

'She has such force of mind,' said Mrs. Bertie. 'So have they all. Poor Charles has a soft corner in his heart for Bell.'

'Charles! how absurd,' said Captain Bertie laughing. 'A mere boy like him! He shows his taste, however. And I believe my first love-fit was somewhere about his age. I shall go back to the "Crown" and write to Hugh, when I have seen you home,' added he presently.

'Then we had better return at once,' said Mrs. Bertie. 'The post goes out at nine.

You spend the night here, then? I wish I had known of your coming, that I might have prepared for you.'

'Pray don't think of such a thing. I shall do very well at the "Crown"—rather a poor inn, by-the-bye.'

'Oh, there is no competition, no one to make an effort for.'

'Hardsand is rather a poor place,—one of the poorest I ever saw; quite the poorest. I wonder how you came to settle down here—'

'It is cheap.'

'Or can have the resolution to continue here.'

'I have grown accustomed and attached to it.'

'I don't think I ever could!'

'No, to any one accustomed to constant change it must seem dull enough.'

'A wreck or two, and a little smuggling, must be the only excitements.'

'Yes.'

'Perry told me a long story about a smuggling affair on board the "Lively Biddy."'

'The "Lively Peggy." She is chartered by Bell Frobisher's eldest sister.'

'What an odd vocation for a woman She sails in it, I understand.'

'Perry told you all about it, I dare say,' said Mrs. Bertie, smiling.

'He told me a good deal, certainly. I suppose it was all true?'

'Oh, he is truth itself.'

'I was highly amused. The lady must be a woman of spirit. By-the-bye, *is* she a lady?'

'You might think her rather homely, but by no means vulgar. She is a popular favourite.'

He lapsed into silence, and after a long pause, said,—

'Mrs. Bertie, I am glad I came down here. None of us knew anything about you. I assure you I did not expect—that is—in short, I did not think we should get on so well together.'

'I am very glad, indeed, that you came,' said Mrs. Bertie. 'It is such a gratification to have exchanged friendly words at last with one of the family. Dear me, it is time Perry should be in bed.'

'Don't disturb him; he's very happy. Miss Frobisher ditto, apparently.'

Just then Bell and Perry desisted from their researches and returned to the others. They all walked slowly back, pausing now

and then to look at the rising moon, and Captain Bertie took leave of them to write his letter.

He reappeared next morning, soon after breakfast. Bell happened to be the only one in the room.

'Miss Frobisher, I am glad to find you alone. I have a few words to say to you.'

'Perry has only gone to wash his hands,' said Bell.

'It's about Perry I want to speak. He's a capital little fellow; the most promising boy I ever knew. I only wish he were not as much too young as Charles is too old. Perry tells me his mamma does not like him to go to sea. Try to talk her out of that feeling. You are her dearest friend, Perry says; therefore you have influence. You must love this boy very much, or you would not bestow such pains on him. Yes, you must love him very much, or he would not love *you* so. If you want to do him a good turn, fit him for what I want him to be.'

'How?' said Bell, with great interest.

'I will tell you;' and he went fully though succinctly into the course of teaching that would fit Perry best for a naval career.

'He's a very little fellow; I know we can't

expect much, but you can give him the elements, the outlines. You have the mind for it, I see. Do you know anything of Euclid?'

'No.'

'It would do you a great deal of good to study mathematics. It would do every woman good.'

'Perhaps I could teach myself? To assist Perry, I gladly will try.'

'No; I don't think you can teach yourself. If Charles comes home, he can teach you.'

'I don't much want to learn of Charles.'

'I am not surprised at that. Charles might teach his little brother himself, but he won't, I 'll answer for it! Well, you will get Perry well on in geography and arithmetic; little vessels won't bear overfilling. You 'll want books; I 'll send you some; I 'll send *him* some, you know, I mean. Well, Miss Frobisher, this was what I had to say to you. You won't take it amiss, I know.'

'O no, indeed! I take it very kindly.'

'I 'm quite surprised at my freeness in thus speaking to you; but, you see, I 'm anxious to do something for the family, and yet not to raise unbounded expectations. Charles I can make nothing of. To make amends for it to his mother, I would gladly make some-

thing of Perry. He might be a smart officer. It is the only line in which I can do *anything;* therefore, if I 'm to be of use to my brother's orphans, you may assist me, don't you see, by training Perry, and getting over his mother's objections.'

'I will do my best,' said Bell. He thanked her by a look, and Mrs. Bertie and Perry at the same instant came in.

'And now, I 'm off,' said Captain Bertie, rising. 'You 'll lose nothing by my going, Mrs. Bertie, for on my return I shall send Charles to you.'

'I shall lose a great deal by your going,' said Mrs. Bertie, 'though, of course, I shall be delighted to see dear Charles.'

'May I see you off, uncle?' said Perry.

'Yes, by all means.'

He shook hands with Mrs. Bertie and Bell, and cordially took leave of them.

'I cannot sufficiently wonder,' ejaculated Mrs. Bertie, after watching him out of sight, 'at his being so completely different from what I had supposed. Charles never said a word of his good looks and fascinating manner. I cannot be sufficiently glad that he came himself instead of writing. It has taken off all the bitterness of the disappoint-

ment, though a heavy one it is. None of the Berties are good letter-writers. They say as little as they can, in as few words—never find room for kind inquiries, and so forth. This has helped to estrange us. But I can never feel strange with Captain Bertie again.'

When Perry came back, he looked brim-full of some very important subject.

'What is on your mind, Perry?' said Bell.

'Nothing particular. At least many things that are very particular. My uncle has been giving me some good advice, and I 'm afraid of losing any of it.'

'Write it down in your log.'

'That 's a capital idea, Bell! May it do instead of an exercise?'

'Yes, I think it may; if you write it very well indeed.'

To work set Perry; and Bell was not sorry to stitch his wristbands free from continual interruptions, and enjoy her own thoughts. When he had finished, she said,—

'May I see what you have written?'

'Yes, if you like; only I 'm afraid the writing is not very good.'

'I must make allowance for it, as you were afraid of forgetting what your uncle said.'

'I didn't know you were going to read it, Bell, so you must not mind the expressions.'

'Very well.'

These were the expressions,—

'Uncle says when mids are examined they are expected to know all about navigation and seamanship, about the different sailings, working tides, and double altitudes; and how to find the longitude by the time-keeper, and about lunar observations. Uncle said a mid must be able to tell them how to conduct a ship from such and such a place to another, under every disadvantage of wind and tide.

'When I told him all I knew, he said it was wonderful a young lady could teach me so much; but that it amounted in fact to very little indeed—almost nothing; and that if I meant ever to do good in the service, and to rise in it, I must *look very sharp indeed*, or I should fall short of the mark, like . . . . (He needn't have said that.)

'Uncle says the boys on board the "Atalanta" learn Euclid and read Cæsar, and French from Ollendorf, first writing it out and then learning it. I told him we had Ollendorf and Euclid (at least Charles has). So he said I had better learn all I could of

mathematics and everything, and practise climbing and not mind little hardships, and then, in course of time, we should see what we should see. I think I knew what he was alluding to, though he didn't speak out plain, for his eyes looked very bright and smiling.'

CHAPTER XVI.

CAPTAIN BERTIE *to the Rev. Hugh Bertie, Steephollow,—*

'THE CROWN, HARDSAND, *June* 28.

'DEAR HUGH,—You will be surprised enough to get a letter from me with the above address. During the last six years I have only enjoyed fourteen days at home. But I don't mention this in the way of grumbling, for no officer has a right to amuse himself on shore till he is a post-captain, nor even then if it interferes with his duty. Well, my career has been excellent discipline to me—my younkers say I 'm too fond of discipline; but one cannot be. I 'm not speaking of unreasonable, unreasoning dogmatism like my father's, but a strict and just authority. It was a fine thing for me to be put, when a squeaker, under Captain

Hudson. What an unfortunate career that man's was! The ill wind that blows nobody any good always filled his sails, and a dozen times the "Atè" must have gone to pieces had the exact discipline to which his men were accustomed been in any degree less absolutely maintained. It saved their lives again and again. Hudson commanded such implicit confidence by his knowing the best possible thing to be done under every circumstance, that the obedience of all on board was perfect. We felt we were under the command of a master-mind; and great as his misfortunes were, he really reaped more credit for his conduct under them, than others have gained by the most brilliant success.

'Well, here I am a post-captain at last, and not so very old neither. All owing to personal merit, sir, and no patronage, take my word for it! One of my first thoughts when I was posted to the "Atalanta," was to have one of poor Charles's orphan lads on board, so I wrote to his mother to send me the eldest. It seemed such a little while since poor Charles's death, that I had no idea the boy was so old. He came on board—as like his father as my two thumbs are like each other. I declare the first sight

of him nearly unmanned me. But, in a little while—*you* know what he is, so you 'll not be surprised that he won't make a sailor. As well make a mainsail of a lady's veil. The poorest hand I *ever* knew! and so conceited withal! I really was glad that his age gave me a reason for not having him put on the ship's books. I gave him a good pitching and tossing in the Mediterranean; and as soon as we reached Spithead I intended to pack him off to his mother, with a letter explaining the reason. Something in a chance look that reminded me of his father changed this purpose. Though not the only son of his mother, yet she was a widow, and probably doated on him; so I thought I 'd run down and break it to her myself. I am very glad I did so. In a very poor little street of this poor little town, I found the small house in which she lived, which had something about it that raised it above its neighbours—a penn'orth of putty and a penn'orth of paint will do that, you know. Clean door-step, clean curtains, clean window-panes, a pretty flower or two in the window; small matters like these indicate something above mere decency —refinement. I knocked at the door. You

know we had always concluded Charles had lost his heart to a pretty face, and did not think the more of him for it. I knocked once, twice, at the door, and it opened and disclosed one of the most beautiful, dignified faces I ever saw.

'Don't be deluded, it *wasn't* Mrs. Charles, though a lovely little Peregrine was clinging to her skirts, and looking up at me with his blue, fearless eyes, said, "Are you my uncle Perry?" That boy might be made anything of. He shall be made something first-rate of by me. I 'll take him in charge. He shall be my heir.

'The beautiful girl who was *not* Mrs. Charles, only her dearest friend, received me with simple dignity, and went to find Mrs. Bertie, who presently came in.

'Hugh, she is a very lovely woman still, though a little on the wane. She must have been charming when Charles married her. There is a quiet elegance about her for which I was unprepared. In person and manner she does not disgrace the name of Bertie. I am very glad to have made her acquaintance. It seems she is supporting herself in modest independence, by keeping a day-school; she is respected in

the place. This I learn from the people of the inn. She was a good deal touched at first, cried a little, spoke up for Charles, as a mother naturally would; yet so quietly, so gently! And what do you think of the little one firing up like a little hero, and saying to me, "I don't like to hear my brother spoken against!" I declare I respected him for it. Something he added about "Bell says we shouldn't speak ill of the absent." Bell was the handsome girl I named just now. Handsome is quite the wrong word, by the way, quite an unworthy word, except in the sense of "handsome is that handsome does," and she has done handsomely, to say the least of it, by our little nephew Perry; guides him with a rein of silk, commands his implicit obedience; what an excellent foundation for his future character! She is not his governess, you understand; but his mother's dearest friend. Curiously enough, she is descended from old Sir Martin Frobisher. Her lineage, I should think, must be almost as good as ours.

'Well, I'm glad I came down here to judge of Mrs. Charles for myself. It has enabled me to soften the disappointment.

She is not angry with me; only sorry. I have told her I would ask you to do something for Charles, he being more in your line than mine. You have put what good he has into him. And he speaks of you very affectionately. So bear him in mind, will you, and find him something or other, an' thou lovest me, or rather for the sake of his father, and I may really add of his mother. If you 'll take him in hand, I 'll take the little one. Then Mrs. Bertie will only have to maintain herself. Enough to do, too. More than should fall to the lot of a woman; a pretty woman, the widow of a Bertie.

'I have dined with her; had a famous chat with them all. It is now almost post-time, and I can only add love to all your house.—Your affectionate brother,

'PEREGRINE BERTIE.'

Before this letter could produce any results, Charles was at home again. He looked so brown and manly that Mrs. Bertie could not help expressing her maternal pride and admiration, which he received very smilingly, almost affably, as though he knew it was his due. He seemed to think he had almost seen as much of the world

and of human life as Sindbad the Sailor; spoke with indulgent contempt of his uncle as 'cranky,' and seemed decidedly of opinion that the service would sustain a greater loss in him than he in the service.

Bell could not bear this new phase of Charles's character. She doubted if it *were* quite new; if the conceit and self-content now cropping out had not always been characteristic of him. She found it difficult to repress his too assured attempts at light courtship except by being brusque and rude to him. Happily it occurred to her that she might turn him to account by getting him to teach her the rudiments of mathematics, which she, in her turn, could dispense to Perry in infinitesimally small doses.

Charles liked this well enough, though he would have made it a mere excuse for philandering, had she not, at the outset, peremptorily insisted on "business first, nonsense afterwards," and she took care to slip away directly that business ended and nonsense began. So that Charles found, if he would have the luxury of her companionship at all, he must apply himself to his task in serious earnest.

Perry's admiration of his brother was profound; his credulity without a flaw. The only thing he did not like was Charles's slighting tone in speaking of Captain Bertie.

'I don't think you understood him, Charley,' said he.

'A likely thing!' said Charles derisively. 'Much *you* must know about it, Master Perry! Do you suppose, then, that *you* understand him?'

'Yes, I do,' said Perry stoutly; 'and I can tell you why—because I 've a fellow-feeling for him. (There is such an expression, isn't there, Bell?—yes, I thought there was.) I 'm fond of the sea, which you are not, Charley; and therefore I 'm fond of sailors.'

'I 'm sure I wish you had my berth on board the "Atalanta," then,' said Charles carelessly.

'Perhaps I shall, some day,' said Perry.

'What makes you say that, youngster?'

'I think my uncle means to have me.'

'Did he say so?' said Charles quickly.

'He said "we shall see what we shall see."'

'Ho, ho, ho!'

'Perry, don't say any more about it,' said Bell.

'No, I won't,' said Perry, 'since it makes Charles warm.'

'Warm! you ridiculous chap!—come, be off, you!'

'Yes, clear away your books, Perry dear, and go down to the sands,' said Bell. 'I'm coming too.'

'Bell, don't go,' said Charles.

She said, 'Certainly I shall,' very gravely, and left the room.

She had not long been seated on the shingle, however, before Charles followed her.

'I suppose you don't consider the shingle intended for your sole and separate use?' said he, casting himself on it.

'By no means,' said Bell, continuing to read intently.

After a pause, he said,—

'Bell, whence comes this change?'

'What change?' said she, looking around, and then at him.

'In you.'

'In me? I am not aware of any.' And she resumed her reading.

'That book must be very interesting,' said Charles, glancing at the title. '"Bonnycastle's Arithmetic," by all that's lively!'

'Don't swear.'

'You must be reading it for a feint.'

'A what?'

'A blind. Something to seem to read, as people use books when travelling.'

'I 'm much obliged to you!'

'But seriously, do you mean you are reading "Bonnycastle" for amusement?'

'For improvement.'

'My senses! You remind me of the lady who read through Euclid's Elements just as she would a novel.'

'I am trying to make out something I want to know—or was trying, till you interrupted me.'

'Shall I assist you?'

'No, thank you; not now.'

'Why not?'

'Because I think it very tiresome to be followed about and interrupted when I want to think my own thoughts a little.'

'Well, Bell, that's plain enough to be understood, at all events. I 'll go, since my presence is so disagreeable to you. I must say, though, I wish I knew whence arises this change in your manner to me. But I need not ask—I divine! It is because my uncle has thrown me off. I had expected something nobler of you.'

'I might truly expect something nobler of *you* than such an unfounded suspicion,' said Bell quickly. 'When did I ever think less of a person for being unfortunate? It was no surprise to me that you did not prove adapted for a sailor; but I own it does surprise me to hear you speak of your uncle as you do, and see that you so little value him.'

'What can you know of him?'

'Very little, certainly. But what little I did see and hear, gave me the impression of a fine character.'

Charles felt a sudden pang; and said, 'Well; you are right. To a certain extent at least. He is brave and determined. Thoroughly knows how to handle a ship. Is just, though strict, to his men.'

'Then how can you say such depreciating little things of him, especially in hearing of Perry, as if to undermine him in his good opinion? Charles, I call it very bad of you. You and Captain Bertie could not go on together; I say not where the fault was, but a separation ensued. He may still be a very valuable friend to your little brother, therefore you should not weaken his respect for him.'

'I don't believe I could.'

'Nor do I. But you weaken my respect for *you*, Charles, by going on in that manner.'

'Bell, I am really and truly sorry; I see I was wrong. Say you forgive me.'

'Not till I see some amendment.'

'Do.'

'No; I will not.'

'I promise I won't speak slightingly of my uncle in Perry's hearing again.'

'Very well. If you keep that promise, I 'll forgive you.'

On which, Charles held out his hand to her; but she withheld her own, saying, 'Nonsense—no occasion.'

After this they went on very harmoniously and prosaically.

Hetty had never been a letter-writer; and her short, cramped billets, only one or two in number, did not satisfy Bell's yearning affection. She spoke of being well and happy; of supping in the housekeeper's room with Mrs. Mellon and Mr. Harper. Who Mr. Harper was, Bell could not make out, whether librarian or chaplain. She would have been glad of a catalogue *raisonné* of Hetty's surroundings, even to the shape

and size of her room and the colour of the furniture.

One day a letter came to Bell. It was in a strange hand, and signed Mary Mellon. It began,—

'Mrs. Mellon's respects to Miss Bell Frobisher, and Lord Harry is down with the scarlet fever. Miss Hetty has took it too. My Lord would not let her out of his sight except when asleep, and kept holding her hand, so it is not surprising she has took it heavy. Dr. Perkins is in attendance, and she has the best of advice, but the maids (we have only two here now) are afraid of catching it, and Mr. Harper recommends me to acquaint you, madam, as since she was lightheaded she keeps calling on you by the name of Bell, and says she wishes she had such nursing as you bestowed on a gentleman named Perry. I have no wish to alarm, but think, as does Mr. Harper, that if you wish to see your sister alive, you had best start at your earliest convenience.—Yours respectfully, 'MARY MELLON.'

Bell's tears began to flow before she had half read this letter, to the great consternation of Perry, who said in an awe-stricken voice, 'Shall I call mamma?'

'Yes, do, dear,' said Bell, brushing the tears from her eyes, and in another instant he was off, and returned with his mother.

Bell said, 'Hetty is very ill, I must go to her;' and put the letter into her friend's hand. When Mrs. Bertie, with great concern, had read it, she fully concurred with Bell; and with affectionate promptitude suggested and accelerated every necessary preparation for the journey. Charles and Perry vied in solicitude to be of use; and Charles would gladly have been her escort on the road, but the expense was a subject they were compelled to consider, and Bell declared she had no fears on her own account. They contented themselves, therefore, with all accompanying her to the coach-office, and Charles was her companion to the nearest railway-station, a few miles off, saw to her luggage, placed her in a second-class carriage which had no other occupant, and was rewarded by her grateful look of thanks as the train moved onward. He returned pleased with himself and with her.

CHAPTER XVII.

RAILWAYS were almost novelties thirty years ago, and Bell was so unused to travelling that her journey had something exciting, and would have been even alarming to her, had she not been so preoccupied by her sister's danger. The surprise, agitation, bustle of packing and selecting what to pack, the rapid walk and tedious coach-journey, had all combined to raise her almost to fever-height of excitement; and now there was something soothing in being borne forward so swiftly, without the least effort of her own, towards the object of her desires, that amounted to a sad luxury. The unexpected noises, the shrill whistle, and sudden plunge into darkness as they entered a tunnel, filled her with momentary dread; but she had a feeling she should be upborne in

what she had undertaken that overcame all fears. The scenes through which she so swiftly passed, which in ordinary circumstances would have caused incessant amusement and interest, now passed as unnoticed as the wreaths of white smoke that floated past and cast fantastic shadows on the landscape.

She alighted at none of the stations, for she wanted no refreshment, and she was afraid of losing her place in the train. As the gloom of evening darkened round her, there seemed something grandly mysterious in the aspect of the outer world through which they were fleeting. Distant lights in farm-house or cottage, the uncertain wandering of a flickering lantern through unseen paths, the pale meteors dancing on swampy ground, the dark rushing form of some night-bird, the hoarse or quick bark of a dog, the figure of some lonely traveller galloping across a moor, filled her mind with a series of vague romances that had a luxurious melancholy. Mingled with them were imaginary pictures of Hetty's sick-bed, of loving looks, of dying words, that filled her eyes with unchecked tears. And all the while it grew darker and darker.

They were approaching a junction, where she would have to change carriages, and where Charles had told her the great difficulty would be to cross the line by an underground passage, time enough to catch the other train. Just as they reached the station, a tremendous jarring shock, an unearthly grating sound, followed by piercing screams and hoarse cries, told unmistakably that an accident had happened. Bell was thrown forward with violence, but the next instant had let down the window, and was calling piteously for some one to let her out. Nobody attended to her; every one was rushing to the upper end of the train, leaving the remoter one deserted. She found her face was cut and bleeding; she did not mind that, but continued to shake the door violently and cry, 'Let me out! please let me out!'—'O dear, O dear!' she exclaimed in desperation as a deafening bell was rung which drowned every other noise in its clangour, 'I shall lose the other train.' She cried aloud, 'Let me out! let me out!' with sharp, quick tones that at length were heard by some one who rushed forward in the dark.

'What is it? where are you? A woman, and hurt?'

'Yes! yes! I'm losing my train; I'm going to a sister dying.'

A strong hand seized the door-handle; she had believed herself locked in, but was not.

'Do you want to go by the down train? So do I. We must run for it. Your face is bleeding. Are you much hurt? Do you know how to cross the line?'

'No; not in the least.'

'Where's your luggage?'

'I've only this great bag.'

'All the better. Come along.'

He seized her hand, snatched her heavy bag from her, and they raced rather than ran along the platform, down a steep staircase, through a dimly lighted tunnel, up another flight of stairs, and along the other platform, where the down train was just ready to start.

'First-class or second?'

'Second, sir.' The light shone full on his face, but hers was in shadow.

'All right; here's a carriage with only an old woman in it.'

He opened the door, forced her bag under

the seat, handed her in, and sprang in after her. The next instant the door was locked, the shrill whistle sounded, and they were off.

'Miss Frobisher!'

'I am so very much obliged to you, Captain Bertie.'

'Dear me! how totally unexpected! how glad I am to have been of any service! Do you know you have cut your face?'

'I know it, but I don't feel it,' said Bell, putting her handkerchief to her cheek. 'I don't think it's much.'

'O no, only skin-deep, but some ladies would faint at the sight of a little blood.'

'Luckily, I am no fine lady,' said Bell.

'So I see—so I should have judged; for my part, I detest fine ladies; the most worthless beings in creation, and the most uninteresting. You are not disfigured, it won't disfigure you.'

'Oh, I don't mind about that.'

'You are preoccupied by some paramount interest.'

'My sister Hetty is ill with scarlet fever—in danger.'

'And you are going to her? Have you had it?'

'No.'

'But is your going to her safe?'

'Safe?' said Bell with warmth. 'Fever patients would be badly off if people never went near them unless they were safe.'

'True; just what I should have expected from—a woman,' he added softly—

"When pain and sickness wring the brow."—

The quotation is somewhat hackneyed. Well, I hope God will watch over you.'

'I'm sure He will,' said Bell. 'He always has.'

'I too am obeying a call to the house of sorrow,' said Captain Bertie after a pause. 'Hugh Bertie, the heir of our line, only son of my eldest brother, has been killed.'

'Indeed—dear me!'

'It will be a terrible loss to his father—a terrible blow to *my* father. His eldest son will be without direct male descendant. He dying without a son, and I dying childless, my nephew Charles will represent the family.'

'Dear me. But that is a remote contingency, and may never occur.'

'Very likely to occur, though,' said Captain Bertie. 'My brother's life is not worth many years' purchase.'

'But how did young Mr. Bertie die?' said Bell, thinking more of the bereavement

than the succession. Captain Bertie saw she did so, and told how he had accidentally shot himself in crossing a stile.

'He was a promising boy, I believe,' he said, 'but I knew nothing of him personally, having been so many years afloat. It will be a dreadful cut-up to my brother Hugh—with a valetudinarian wife and one little girl. He will probably have Charles to fill up the blank, adopt him, perhaps, but not yet; his heart is too sore, the void must remain unfilled for a while. There are some blanks that never can be filled.'

'O yes.'

'What do you think of Charles? You have seen him at home. I have only known him on shipboard. What do you think of him?'

'There is a great deal of good in him,' said Bell.

'What sort of good?'

'Good principles, good feelings. He is very religious, I think, and would not do a wrong thing on any account. Very dutiful, and fond of his mother.'

'Ha! But why will he be such a young prig?'

'Perhaps, because he *is* so young,' said Bell, smiling.

'*I* wasn't priggish at his years; Perry is not.'

'Oh, Perry is such a very little boy! We should soon laugh him out of it.'

'Charles is a boy too—not in the light of a midshipman, you know; he would be an old middy, but—to think of falling in love, for instance?'

'I should think so,' said Bell, laughing a little.

'Oh, you would,' said Captain Bertie, in an easier tone. 'We are quite agreed.'

After this, thinking it was a good opportunity of speaking up for Charles to his uncle, whose opinion might be of great importance to him hereafter, Bell searched her memory for every little trait of goodness in him, and succeeded in showing him in a very favourable light.

After this, thinking it was also a good opportunity of putting in a word for Perry, she spoke of him with all the warmth of her generous nature; told how the old sailors and fishermen delighted in him—how well he bore his disappointment about going with Miss Biddy—and, venturing to amuse as well as interest, told of his testamentary dispositions, which made Captain Bertie smile.

'You are evidently high in Perry's graces,'

said he, 'or he would not have called his brig "The Bell." What is he doing now?'

She told of his daily lessons.

'Does he get through all that? You must give him a good many lifts, I fancy.'

'Yes, I do,' said she simply. 'You know our object is the same.'

'What object?'

'To get him on.'

'You think, then, your lifts do not teach him to evade difficulties?'

'O no, I am sure they do not; they are not of that kind.'

When this subject was exhausted, they ceased talking, and fell into reverie. Bell's thoughts, suddenly turned from their previous channel, were very pleasurable, but gradually reverted to their original course as she drew nearer and nearer to Hetty; and Captain Bertie, by the light of their carriage lamps, could see tears shining in her eyes. After watching her a little, unperceived, he said,—

'Where do you get out?'

'At Burley Gate.'

'Then we are close upon it. Shall you take a fly?'

'Yes, I suppose I had better, if there be one.'

'I'll ascertain.'

He did so; saw her into it, shook hands with her like an old friend, said, 'I trust you will find your sister better;' saw her off, and, returning to the train, availed himself of the privilege of his first-class ticket. Whatever his course of thought was, as he pursued his journey, it was grave and absorbing.

Bell, meanwhile, found herself traversing unknown country roads and lanes, in almost total darkness. Presently the moon broke through clouds, and gave a vague and ghastly light. At length they stopped, and the driver shouted, 'Gate! Gate!'

After a time, an old man opened the door of a pretty lodge and unlocked the gate, and held it open while they drove in. The fly clattered down a long avenue, and at length drew up at the back entrance of a heavy pile of buildings; irregular outlines of tower, turret, and balustrade sharply cutting against the moonlit sky. The driver rang a deep-toned bell; an entrance-door presently opened and some one looked out. Bell heard a man's subdued voice say,—

'Here 's Miss Bell, I think, Mrs. Mellon.'

He came out, handed her out of the fly,

dismissed the driver, and accompanied her into a vaulted stone lobby, with many passages branching from it.

'You will find your sister no worse, Miss Frobisher,' said he kindly. 'I daresay your good nursing will make her better. The doctor says the crisis is past. This is Mrs. Mellon's room.'

He showed her into a comfortable room, with two candles and a cheerful fire burning; and Mrs. Mellon, who seemed busy grating nutmeg, came forward and welcomed her in a motherly manner.

'I knew you 'd come,' said she. 'I told Miss Hetty you were coming, and she has been better ever since.'

'I should like to see her at once, please,' said Bell.

'You shall see her at once, only first you must drink a little of this white-wine negus, and eat this bit of toast, to warm you after your journey, for you look quite cold—and, my dear, you have cut your face, and it has been bleeding! You must wash it, and refresh yourself a little, or you 'll frighten your sister. Don't fancy I want to keep you from her a minute longer than I can help, for I shall be very glad to be relieved from

her charge; my first duty, you know, being to Lord Harry. He is going on nicely, I am happy to say; but poor Mary and Jane are almost worn out. I don't know what we should have done without Mr. Harper. Usually, he is shut up with his books; but really he has been Jack of all trades. You see, we are slack of hands, my lord and lady being abroad. Some of the establishment are gone to their homes, and others discharged. Lord Harry would have done badly but for Miss Hetty and me, but indeed she took the greatest part of the fag till she fell ill herself. He was so fond of her, he could not bear her out of his sight.'

All this while Bell was washing her face, smoothing her hair, arranging her dress, and taking a few spoonfuls of the hot negus. As Mrs. Mellon saw she was really impatient to be with her sister, she did not insist on her finishing the contents of the great cut-glass goblet, but led the way along matted passages, and up narrow back-stairs, and along other passages, till they reached Hetty's bedroom. Directly she opened the door, Hetty partly raised herself from her pillow, saying, in a strangely altered voice,—

'Oh, Bell, I 'm so glad you 're come!' and then fell back again.

Bell, quite forgetful, or neglectful of precaution, bent over her and kissed her, pressed her hot hand, and then sat down beside her.

'I can't talk much, my head aches so,' said Hetty, 'and I can't look at you much, the light glares so; but do keep near me, and let me feel you are near.'

'Yes, I will,' said Bell.

Hetty closed her eyes in full trust, and, after a few restless movements, fell asleep; on which Mrs. Mellon, giving Bell a significant look of satisfaction, indicated by signs the position of the medicine, the watch, the lemon-water, etc., and then, with a little nod, stole away to Lord Harry.

Bell found herself seated in a very comfortable high-backed nursing-chair; it was a great relief to see Hetty sleeping so quietly; she intended to sit watching beside her all night, but her unwonted fatigue and excitement, and the sedative effect of the negus, gradually asserted their influence on her nerves—

> 'Till, like a shutting flower, her senses close,
> And on her lies the beauty of repose.'

CHAPTER XVIII.

As the 'Lively Peggy' came into harbour, Miss Biddy missed the loved familiar sisters flying down to meet her. True, she knew that Hetty would not be there, but she strained her eyes in vain for Bell; and would have foreboded some disaster, had not Mrs. Bertie and Perry stood at the edge of the quay to greet her.

As Miss Biddy stepped on shore, she grasped Mrs. Bertie's hand, and said,—

'I am very glad, indeed, to see you; but how lonely it is to miss the girls!'

'Bell has gone to see Hetty,' said Mrs. Bertie.

'To see Hetty? Was she asked?'

'Yes. Hetty was not very well, and wished to see her sister. So they sent for

her. Hetty had taken a feverish complaint from Lord Harry.'

'Dear me!' cried Miss Biddy, perturbed. 'Scarlet fever, perhaps.'

'Yes, it was; but don't be alarmed. She is doing nicely now.'

'But Bell! Bell may catch it.'

'Bell is in quarantine at present, but it is nearly over. She has shown no symptoms of fever as yet; and the doctor says she may soon be considered safe.'

'Dear Bell! poor Hetty!' said Miss Biddy with emotion. 'I felt as if something must have gone wrong when I missed them on the quay. Poor, dear girls!' and she was absently turning up the accustomed path to her old house, when she stopped short and then changed her course, saying, a little bitterly,—

'I have no roof of my own over my head now.'

'No; but you soon will have,' said Mrs. Bertie; 'and, meanwhile, I shall be delighted to have you. I miss Bell so, you can't think —and you will help to fill her place.'

'And *I* miss Bell,' put in Perry with emphasis. Then sliding his hand into hers, he said artlessly,—

'Has this been a good trip?'

'Yes, Perry, a very good one. I ought to be very glad and thankful, only I 'm sorry for my sisters.'

'But, Miss Biddy, only think,' resumed Perry, 'uncle Peregrine has been down to see us; and, oh! he 's such a—brick! We all like him very much indeed, and he liked mamma and Bell, and I think he liked me too pretty well, but he sent Charles home because he hadn't the making of a sailor in him.'

Perry said all this very fast, not wanting to be forestalled; but Mrs. Bertie went on with—

'Yes, indeed, this has been quite an eventful time during your absence. Captain Bertie's visit took me quite by surprise; and of course I was greatly disappointed about Charles; but he broke it to me so kindly, and is such a fine, high-spirited, noble-minded man; quite the gentleman, and quite a Bertie, and the very image of my poor Charles; and though he has sent back one nephew, he is going to take the other. Perry, you need not prick up your ears; we are pretty sure (was what I was going to say) that he will do something for Perry some of these days,

if Perry will be a good boy and get on with his lessons.'

'Yes, I'm *quite* sure,' interposed Perry, 'because he said it.'

Miss Biddy's lively interest in these communications was broken by salutations, right and left, to the various old acquaintance accustomed to greet her on her return from sea; and only fragments of talk ensued till they reached Mrs. Bertie's house, where she was immediately installed in the neat little room that had been allotted to Bell. Soon she found herself comfortably seated at Mrs. Bertie's fireside, when the chat was resumed at the tea-table, and she heard the full details of Bell's hasty departure, the railway accident, the rencontre with Captain Bertie, and her subsequent attendance on Hetty.

'Bell says they are as kind as kind can be,' said Mrs. Bertie, 'but it seems strange to her to see such an immense house with only two or three servants in it, and most of the rooms shut up. Now that Hetty and Lord Harry are recovering, they make quite a snug little party in the housekeeper's room, where the little Lord will be close to his darling Hetty, though she is too weak to amuse him; so it devolves on Bell to enter-

tain without fatiguing him, just as she used to entertain Perry, and Mr. Harper is pretty often of the party.'

'Who is Mr. Harper?' interrupted Miss Biddy.

'Mr. Harper,' said Mrs. Bertie, 'is the son of the tutor who made the grand tour with the Marquis; and the Marquis had such a good opinion of the father that he resolved to befriend the son, so he paid his college expenses, and made him his librarian; and now that Lord Harry is recovering from the pressure on the brain, he is to be put under Mr. Harper, who is to teach him, little by little, as he can bear it, till he can take his place among other boys. Bell says he is very gentle and domestic, and makes himself quite at home in their small circle, which he seems to prefer to his own pretty cottage in the grounds. The Marquis and Marchioness are on their way home now from Styria, and it seems likely Hetty's engagement will end when they return.'

'Well, I shall be very glad to get her back again,' said Miss Biddy; 'for it hardly seems like coming home when neither of the girls comes to meet me. The worst of it is that it *isn't* coming home, for I've no

home to come to, and should not know where to put the girls if they were here. I shall go and look at Mary Gray's rooms to-morrow. She must be on the point of marriage now, and will soon want the cottage off her hands.'

'Yes, Bell has had more than one talk with her about it,' said Mrs. Bertie, 'and has planned it all quite nicely, so that only your confirmation is wanting.'

'Are you going to be confirmed?' said Perry in surprise, at which they laughed.

'Mary Gray is going to be married on Saturday,' he presently added; 'she wouldn't be married on Friday, because it 's unlucky.'

'Mary Gray and I shall soon arrange matters,' said Miss Biddy, 'and what things I cannot pack into the house, I shall sell.'

'O no, do not, you will get so little for them,' said Mrs. Bertie, 'and some of these days you may again be able to use them in a good house.'

'Well, I wish it may be so; but the day is far off yet.'

'But you haven't heard about Charles? Charles's prospects have much changed.'

'Indeed? Do tell me all about it.'

'He was very mortified, poor fellow, of

course, at being sent home by his uncle; but Captain Bertie has so good a heart that he would not lose sight of him. He wrote about him to his brother. Before anything ensued from it, Mr. Bertie's only son, a fine lad of fifteen, who was doated on by his grandfather, accidentally shot himself in crossing a stile with his gun. You may imagine what grief the family was plunged into by this sad event. Old Sir Peregrine, I understand, took it in a very unsubdued manner; you know he thinks everything ought to bend to his will, and cannot bear to be crossed. It was on his estate the accident happened, for Hugh was often staying with him; so the family vault was opened, and there was a superb midnight funeral, the tenantry bearing torches and so forth—quite in the old feudal manner. Mr. Hugh Bertie was chief mourner, of course. They say that the meeting with his father was quite affecting; the old man breaking down for the first time, and shedding tears. But I 'm afraid they were not from so pure a source as we could wish. He regrets that the only son of his eldest son is gone; and now that he has only two childless sons living (at least, there 's a girl, who doesn't

count for anything), Charles becomes of importance, you see! So Sir Peregrine sent for him to be at the funeral; and his sober, composed mien (which Captain Bertie, by the way, calls conceited) pleased his grandfather, who told him he was glad to see him so much of a Bertie. So, after keeping him with him a few days, he sent him to Mr. Hugh Bertie, with plenty of money in his pocket (which Charles very generously and dutifully has remitted to me), telling him he would henceforth have a fixed and ample allowance, and sending instructions to Mr. Bertie to take the proper steps to fit Charles for the future representative of the house. This I have had partly from Charles, and partly from his uncle. So I think,' concluded Mrs. Bertie with tempered complacence, 'I may consider Charles as provided for.'

'Yes, indeed,' said Miss Biddy warmly, 'and I heartily rejoice at it.'

'Charles is a very good boy, and certainly clever,' pursued his mother; 'and if he has his little faults, they are such as will be looked on with indulgence. I only hope he may not be spoilt. I hope his grandfather will not make him such a curmudgeon

as himself. Rich as he is, he is never benevolent: he will spend any amount of money to keep up the family, but not a sovereign to save a poor man from want. I do hope Charles will never grow niggardly; and, therefore, I am very glad he is put under his good uncle while his character is still ductile.'

'Charles always appeared singularly religious and steady for his age, so that I hope and think he may be trusted.'

Miss Biddy did not let many hours elapse before she came to an understanding with Mary Gray; so that, at the week's end, she was put in possession of the cottage, and her former servant undertook to clean it down. Meanwhile she had her professional business to attend to; and by the time that was off her hands, she was ready to move as much of her furniture into the four-roomed cottage as it would hold. It consisted of a parlour, kitchen, and two little bedrooms: it was a quaint little tenement, and Miss Biddy felt that when she had her bureau, and her arm-chair, and her own bed, and her picture of Sir Martin Frobisher about her, she should be comfortable enough.

Bell returned just in time to assist in the

removal. She had left Hetty convalescent and happy, and had enjoyed her stay with her very much. It had pleased her to wander about the suites of rooms, and make acquaintance with the pictures, miniatures, and cabinets. Of these Mrs. Mellon had many an interesting detail to give; and there was a fresh unhackneyed charm to Bell in the autograph of Sir Philip Sydney, and the pincushion worked by Mary Queen of Scots, and the doublet and gauntlet of Sir Francis Drake. The library, with its niches full of shelves, and its gallery running along the upper part, held more books than she had supposed any one person to possess; and Mr. Harper, who was here to be found dusting the precious volumes with a silk pocket-handkerchief, was not sorry to vary the monotony of his task by directing her attention to some of the curiosities of literature. As he talked to her of one book and another, he ascertained that though she had not read many books, she had made good use of those within her reach, and was pleased with her good taste and judgment. Hetty had read nothing like as much as Bell, and was in nowise fond of study, but Mr. Harper did not like her the less for it. Seclusion, leisure,

and 'propinquity' had brought him very nearly to the point of falling in love with the gentle pretty girl who played so good-humouredly with Lord Harry, and gave up her entire time to him without spoiling him. Hetty's mind had not to descend from a painful height to her allotted task; she liked her surroundings, her position, and her pay, so that she really was very happy in the present; and as soon as it dawned upon her that Mr. Harper was thinking of her for his wife, she became very happy in the promise of the future. Her engagement did not end with Lord Harry's fever; his parents were pleased with her for having nursed him through it at the cost of a dangerous illness to herself. They begged her to continue with him through the winter; tempering the fatigue of Mr. Harper's short and easy instructions by long games of play, treats of story-telling, etc. The little boy learnt to love her almost as much as Perry loved Bell, though in a more self-willed manner. He often made unreasonable requests, and Hetty often yielded to them; for love knows no load, and the secret of his loving her so was, that, with a child's quick instinct, he knew *she* loved *him*.

Bell, then; left Hetty very useful, valued, and happy. She was sure Mr. Harper was attached to her, but quite ignorant whether he were in a position to marry her; so she left events to take their course, as Hetty did, without too anxious thought for the morrow. Thus she returned to Hardsand, bright and cheerful in the consciousness of fulfilled duty and her sister's restored health, and entered gladly into Biddy's busy cares about the furnishing. Soon the house assumed an air of complete comfort, such as Mary Gray's poor and scanty effects could never give it; and the sisters had long talks in the long evenings, or worked, wrote, or read, in social silence.

> 'There is no need of much to say,
> Or much to tell and hear;
> It is enough to know and feel,
> That those we love are near.'

Miss Biddy now rejoiced in having something to set against her father's debt again, and she trusted that, with the continued blessing of Providence, the day would come, though it might yet be distant, when she should pay his creditors in full. She was now getting more and more familiar with her strange mode of life, and securing more

confidence from her employers ; so that, with unfailing request for God's blessing on her basket and her store, on her going out and coming in, she hoped to see the desire of her soul accomplished. There was yet time for one more trip, before the brig was laid up for the winter.

Bell did not at all mind being left in the house by herself, but Mrs. Bertie was so fond of her that she insisted on her locking it up and staying with her in Miss Biddy's absence. Mrs. Bertie's circumstances were now much easier, for Charles generously sent her half his allowance ; and when one does not take a larger house or more servants, or set up a carriage, and so forth, a little addition to the average income gives real ease and comfort. But she still kept on her school, for Charles might displease his capricious, tyrannical grandfather at any moment, and find all his favours withdrawn.

One day Bell received a letter from Charles, inscribed ' Private,' and thinking it might contain something unpleasant to communicate to Mrs. Bertie, she took it with her to read in her sister's cottage, which she was just going to look after. Having unlocked

the door and opened the shutters, she sat down in Biddy's arm-chair to con at her leisure what Charles might have to say.

He began with expressions of the most unfeigned esteem. He thought she must know, he said, that she had been his first model of what a woman ought to be. Her friendship had raised him to a higher platform ; he could trace certain good and high qualities which he hoped he might without vanity say he possessed ('Not without vanity!' thought Bell) to her influence. He had shown in many direct and indirect ways, the admiration he had, even in boyhood, felt for her. It was therefore his duty, as a Christian, nay, as a mere man of honour, to acquaint her in all frankness with a revulsion in his feelings that had lately taken place. ('What a blessing that I shan't mind it a bit!') It was hardly in woman's nature, he feared —in an ordinary woman's nature—to hear praise of a rival with unwounded ear ; but Bell was no ordinary woman ; she had generosity, strength of mind ; and therefore he, without hesitation, or at any rate after a little hesitation, threw himself on her generosity in avowing that his affections had

detached themselves from Bell and concentred on his cousin Ellen.

Here Bell had a hearty laugh. 'A capital thing too,' thought she. 'This will be just the attachment to please your grandfather. O you conceited fellow! to think I should care a straw about it. It would be just the same, though, if I did. Let me see what more you have to say, Mr. Charles.'

He added hurriedly, that as he believed his mother had not been aware of any serious intentions on his part, and had at most only considered his love for Bell a boyish fancy, he thought there was no good in speaking to her about it, and should be obliged by her keeping the present communication entirely to herself. He added, 'You need not write to tell me that you will; I know I may trust to your honour.'

'Yes, that you certainly may,' said Bell, tearing his letter into little bits, and throwing it into the grate. 'I hope you will be truer to Ellen than you have been to me.'

CHAPTER XIX.

PERRY was reading aloud to Bell, 'I now served out an ounce of raw pork to each man,' when a voice that made them both start said, at the half-open door,—

'Perry, how are you, my man?'

'Uncle Perry! O jolly!' exclaimed Perry in ecstasy, dashing down his book. 'Are you come to dine?'

'Dine! Why, I have but just breakfasted,' said Captain Bertie, laughing, and entering the parlour.

'I'm afraid I cause sad commotion and misrule, Miss Frobisher,' said he, shaking hands with her; 'no more lessons to be got out of Perry, apparently, till I go away.'

'No, indeed,' said Bell. 'I will go and call Mrs. Bertie.'

'One moment—how is your sister, your youngest sister?'

'Oh, quite well now, thank you. How obliged I was, and *am*, to you, Captain Bertie, for your kindness to me on the journey! I shall never forget it.'

'Don't mention it. There was no kindness.'

'Indeed there was! great kindness! But for you I should not have saved the train.'

'Oh, I was very glad to be of service, but I must have been a brute if I had not.'

'Well, I am very much obliged to you indeed.' And she left the room and went for Mrs. Bertie, who heard of her visitor with joy unalloyed, and gladly obeyed the summons.

'I wonder if he will dine here? And the butcher has not been. Would you mind running down, Bell, and ordering something to be sent up at once? It's no use saying what I would like to have; you must see what is to be had.'

Bell did so; and instead of returning, went on to her sister's cottage. Mrs. Bertie had no fear now of her brother-in-law; she felt they were *en rapport*, and could truthfully say—

'This *is* a pleasant surprise! I am very glad indeed to see you, Captain Bertie!'

'We seem like old friends now,' said he,

taking her hand. 'I 'm sure I feel you to be one.'

'Yes, you may. I 'm so very glad we are good friends! Any news of Charles?

'None that I know of. I must ask news of you. Perry, my boy, you may run off. I 'll take a walk with you by and by.'

Perry clutched his brig under his arm, and went away without another word, carefully closing the door behind him.

'A good boy that,' said his uncle, looking after him. 'He'll do well, you may depend.'

'I am so glad you think so!'

'I really do. 'He 'll do credit to me, he 'll do credit to you, he 'll do credit to Miss Frobisher. She still goes on amateur governessing, I see.'

'Yes; it is very good of her. I am certain Perry gets on twice as fast with her as he would with any one else. She gives him such strong motives. He used to be rather fond of flying off from one thing to another; but now he is steady, and can control himself.'

'Excellent. Just as I said. He will do credit to us all. As for Charles, he 'll get along very well too, I make no doubt, now he 's on *terra firma*. But Perry—Charles

will get on very well as long as he's in my father's good graces, but he must be careful how he gets out of them; for my father rules us all. He *will* rule, or cast off altogether. You know something of this: you remember?'

'Yes—yes indeed,' a little awe-stricken.

'Charles has a good deal of self-will, is rather fond of never-minding. So that a gentle hint from you, his tender mother, may perhaps warn him off shoals and quicksands.'

'Certainly, I will tell him to be wary, by all means.'

'I don't want to advise dissimulation, you know, but just a little prudence.'

'Yes, yes, I understand—perfectly.'

'I remember your telling me, the first time I was down here—as a joke, you know—of his fancying himself in love with Miss—Miss Frobisher, and my laughing at such a mere boy having any pretensions of the kind. His affections are rather vagrant, it seems; for now, I understand, he's desperately in love with his cousin Ellen.'

'Dear me,' said Mrs. Bertie, rather disturbed.

'No harm in it, ma'am. Quite a suitable match, if they were but old enough. My

father would like well enough to see them betrothed even now — tied up together so fast that there should be no escape.'

'Dear me! Well, it seems Charles won't cross Sir Peregrine's wishes in this respect, at any rate.'

'Why, no. My father has quite a marrying *furor* on him at present—marrying or giving in marriage.'

'Why don't *you* marry, Captain Bertie?'

'I!' said he, colouring so suddenly and vividly that she was quite shocked at her bluntness. 'Oh, I'm quite too old, you know,' with a little embarrassed laugh.

'I certainly know no such thing. You're not too old at all. I call yours quite the right age, and I'm sure you'd make an excellent husband.'

'All this I have been told quite recently. It comes mended from your lips. But no; my ship is my wife, and I am returning to her almost immediately. Mrs. Bertie, I think when I come to England next time, I might take Perry on board. What say you? Can you part with him?'

'What *can* I say?' returned she, with tears starting to her eyes. 'The parting will be hard, come when it will, but it must come

soon or late ; and such an excellent opening—it is so good of you to propose it.'

'That 's enough. We won't say any more. We understand each other. And now, I think I must be off.'

'Won't you stay to dine ? Do stay.'

'Hum—well—I don't know what to say. Be candid now, and tell me if I shall be a bore ?'

'A bore ! No, certainly.'

'Put you horridly out of the way ?'

'No, not in the least.'

'Won't make any difference ?'

'Not a bit of difference.'

She was making a mental reservation, but it really must be excused ; what business had he to ask such a question ?

'Oh, well then. It may be a long while before I am here again,' with a piteous emphasis on *long*, 'and really, Mrs. Bertie, I enjoy myself uncommonly when I come, for I so seldom have the treat of a woman's society.'

'Where can Bell be ?' said Mrs. Bertie, wishing to leave her to entertain Captain Bertie, while she made a hasty revision of her dinner. But no Bell was at hand, nor was she wanted, for Captain Bertie, remem-

bering his promise, went to the door and called out,—

'Now then, Perry!'

Down rushed Perry, cap in hand, and off they started.

'Where are you steering for?' said the captain.

'Would you like to see the picture of Sir Martin Frobisher, uncle?'

'Sir Martin Frobisher! Yes, by all means.'

'I thought you would, perhaps,' said Perry. 'It was locked up in a warehouse when you were here last, but I can show it you now. I've been thinking over what you would most like to see, and I thought it would be that. Perhaps you mayn't like it much at first; I didn't, but now I've got used to it it seems to me a very nice picture indeed.'

'Where is it?'

'In here,' said Perry, turning into Miss Biddy's cottage, the door of which was ajar. Entering the parlour, he said, 'Bell, here's Uncle Peregrine come to see Sir Martin Frobisher's picture.'

Captain Bertie was quite confounded when he saw Bell start up from her easy-chair and drop her book; but before he could utter a

word of apology for his unintentional intrusion, she said very simply—

'I shall be very glad of your opinion of it, Captain Bertie, for we want very much to know whether it is an original. Are you a judge of pictures?'

'Not a very good judge, perhaps,' said he, 'but we may all have our opinions. Where is the picture?'

'This is it.'

'*This?*'

It was difficult to decipher his expression as he looked hard at the blackavised old commander.

'Who do you suppose the artist to be?' said he.

'We have not the least idea,' said Bell.

'Oh,' said he, smiling; 'I thought you wanted me to determine whether it were a Holbein, or so forth.'

'We know nothing of Holbeins. What we want to know is, *is* it a likeness of Sir Martin Frobisher or not?'

'Why in the world should not it be?' said he briskly, while his eyes laughed merrily, if his mouth did not.

'I don't know, I 'm sure,' said Bell.

'Nor I neither. Why in the world should

we doubt it? Why, this dirty old frame, this worm-eaten panel, carry their date with them. I daresay it's been ever so long in your family.'

'O yes, ever so long.'

'Precisely as I supposed. Why in the world should this old picture have been preserved in your family, if it had not been Sir Martin Frobisher? You can't call it pretty; there's nothing in it to attract the eye; nothing to make it of value on its own account, either in execution or anything else: it must have been preserved simply because it was the authentic likeness of a famous man. Clearly, it *is* Sir Martin Frobisher.'

'Hurra!' said Perry.

Bell looked very much pleased, and said, 'I am very glad of it. You have made it quite clear.'

'O yes,' said Captain Bertie, taking a cane chair, and sitting down on it with his chin and knuckles resting on the back. Having persuaded her, he was doing his best to persuade himself. '"It *must* be so; Plato, thou reasonest well." Who was Plato, Perry?'

'An Attic philosopher, uncle.'

'Why did you give Miss Frobisher that quick look? *I* saw it, you monkey!'

'I looked to be sure I was right,' said Perry, laughing, 'but I knew I was.'

'You thought you would make assurance doubly sure—like my assurance about this picture.'

'You are not laughing at it, are you?' said Bell doubtfully.

'Laughing? I laugh? I'm as grave as a judge. I consider the authenticity of this portrait a very serious question. You have not any manuscripts or relics of Frobisher, I suppose?'

'No.'

'Nothing but this picture. Suppose we take it down, and look at the back.'

They did so; two of the party being duly mystified and impressed.

'Why, look here now!' exclaimed Captain Bertie with great animation, 'what have we here? The initials M. F. What do they stand for but Martin Frobisher?'

'Shouldn't there have been an S. for Sir?' timidly suggested Perry.

'Decidedly not. *Sir* is a title, not a name,' said his uncle. Perry was silenced.

'Might they not be my father's initials?' suggested Bell. 'Mr. Frobisher, you know.'

'*Captain* Frobisher,' said Perry.

'Was his name Martin?' said Captain Bertie.

'No: John.'

'Well then, his initials would have been J. F. not M. F. No, no; this picture is hundreds of years before your father's time, Miss Frobisher. I choose to consider it a portrait of Sir Martin till proved to be the contrary. I replace it on the nail with the reverence due to an original portrait of the sixteenth century.'

Bell and Perry looked equally pleased.

'Well, that's settled, that's one comfort,' said Perry.

'But what a pretty little room that is!' said Captain Bertie, looking round. 'I'm afraid I had no right to come here. It is evidently fitted up solely for female occupation. I feel dreadfully like a trespasser.'

'Miss Biddy had a much larger house than this,' said Perry, 'but Mr. Craikie turned her out of it.'

'Mr. Craikie must have been a scoundrel. Come, Perry, you and I ought to be off. We interrupt Miss Frobisher's studies. She wishes us to go.'

He gave her a smiling, interrogative look; and Bell smiled too, but did not invite him to stay.

'It's almost dinner-time,' said Perry. 'Come along, Bell.'

'I shall follow you in good time,' said Bell; and they passed out. As soon as they were gone, and she had closed the door, she sat down opposite the picture, and remained some time in pleasant reverie; endeavouring to recall every word, look, and tone, in which she was very successful; but though she once doubted whether Captain Bertie had been quizzing her, she put aside the doubt as unworthy of him.

Mrs. Bertie was glad to show this time that her own resources could supply a pretty dinner. Captain Bertie, finding that nautical experiences interested the ladies nearly or quite as much as Perry, entered freely into the events of his naval career, and, enjoying such intelligent and sympathizing listeners, went from one thing to another, dwelt upon with light yet masterly touch, far into the afternoon. They all seemed to have a much clearer understanding of his character than before, now that they knew something of his hardships, his dangers, his wasting

suspenses, his grievous disappointments, his isolation and banishment from his native country. On the other hand, he had many pleasant reminiscences of foreign lands, and could entertainingly describe their principal features of interest.

Regretfully glancing at his watch, he said, 'I must be gone, though I could gladly linger here much longer.'

They all looked sorry; and Mrs. Bertie accompanied him to the door.

'You had better remember my advice, and act upon it,' said she, laughing, as he was going off.

'What advice?' said he, stopping short. 'Oh, I remember! What tempters of us poor men you daughters of Eve are!'

'I am only tempting you for your good.'

He seemed inclined to say something in reply, but checked himself, shook his head, smiled, and was gone.

'How I wish I was going with him!' said Perry, with a great sigh.

'You will, some of these days,' said Bell.

'Don't I wish it were to-morrow!'

Before he went to bed that night, Captain Bertie wrote to his father. According to Mrs. Bertie, all the family were unsatisfactory

letter-writers. Certainly the Captain's epistle was very curt. It ran thus :—

'Sir Peregrine,—Your letter, now lying before me, strongly urges me to marry. If I ever do so, there is but one woman to whom I am disposed to offer my hand. She is without fortune, and of decayed gentility —of the family of Sir Martin Frobisher.— I am, dear Sir Peregrine, your dutiful and obedient son, Peregrine Bertie.'

'Sir Peregrine Bertie, Bart.,
etc. etc.'

Though this style of address might be called the north side of affectionate, Sir Peregrine always preferred respect to attachment, and exacted the most formal expression of it from his children. By return of post, he wrote,—

'Dear Peregrine,—For goodness' sake, marry the young lady before you sail. I told you if you gave me good descent, I would not insist on fortune.'

CHAPTER XX.

'HERE 's a pretty kettle of fish!' mused Captain Bertie over this letter. 'Really my old father takes most extraordinary leaps, from one extreme to the other. How is it possible to obey orders, I should like to know? I 'll take care not to give him time to change his mind, that 's one thing!'

Starting up, he took immediate measures for his journey without a second thought—there would be plenty of time for that on the road. To Mrs. Bertie's intense surprise, he walked in, just as if he had never been out of Hardsand.

'Dear me,' said she hastily, 'is anything the matter?'

'You always think me the bearer of evil tidings,' said he, smiling. 'Nothing is the matter; but I want to have a quiet talk

with you before I go on board. Don't you know a woman's quick wit is sometimes very helpful to a man under difficulties?'

She looked pleased, and said,—

'I 'm afraid I have not much wit, but what little I have shall be freely used in helping you if I can.'

'That 's right. Are we free from interruption?'

'We shall be, if you will wait a moment.'

Running up to Bell, she said, 'My dear Bell, Captain Bertie has come down to speak to me on some business of importance. We must be free from interruption. Will you attend to the little girls?'

'Certainly,' said Bell. 'Perry, you may go and play.'

Mrs. Bertie returned to her visitor, who gave a look of relief, and said, 'You have not been long. I love promptitude.'

'I could not live without it,' said Mrs. Bertie. 'Well, now let me hear your difficulties. Not a quarrel with your father, I hope?' Her kind eyes were full of solicitude.

'No, but yet my father has something to do with it. Mrs. Bertie, I would have spoken to you about it yesterday, but somehow it stuck in my throat. It seemed so quick!—

but I 'm very quick. It seemed so inconsistent—but I 'm sometimes inconsistent.'

'I'm not aware of it, and there is no great harm in being so,' said Mrs. Bertie. 'Everybody is, sometimes, I think.'

'What would you say now, after all my bachelor professions, if I were to talk of marrying?'

'Say?' said she, laughing merrily, and her whole face lighting up, 'why, that it is the very thing I wish for you! What did Benedick say?—"When I said I would die a bachelor, I did not think I should live to be married." The wit and wisdom were both on his side.'

'What a capital woman you are!' cried he, grasping her hand. 'But can you guess who she is?'

'I don't know that I can guess, but I know who I should like. If it be any one I know, there can be but one. But Sir Peregrine—'

'Ah! Sir Peregrine, just now, is in such a fix that he has completely altered his tone. He doesn't care for money; he only cares for connexion.'

'Connexion!' repeated Mrs. Bertie in dismay. 'But—'

'He only cares for old descent—decayed gentility. Read his letter.'

She did, and was duly astonished and delighted.

'You wrote to him about her, then?' said she, with joy.

'Yes; a bold step, wasn't it? You see, he wrote first. He was very urgent about it, almost implored; a very unusual thing with Sir Peregrine. Now, the very first day I spent here in Miss Frobisher's company, the thought pressed itself upon me—"Here is the woman I should like for my wife." I thrust it from me, wouldn't attend to it; the thing seemed out of the question. Still her sweet face and dignified yet simple demeanour recurred to me when we were apart; and that talk you and I had about her on the sands. Then, you know, we were thrown together in that unexpected way on the railway. I then saw what she was. Intrepid, devoted, flying to the succour of a sister at her own imminent risk; setting self at naught. I felt here was the very character I could love with all my heart and soul. Our courses diverged again. But see the chain of events! Hugh's death, my father's anxieties, his altered tone, his urgent letter, my coming down here and seeing her again, this answer to my letter. Whom

God intends to join, there is no fear that events shall sunder.'

'No, indeed. But—really I think you had better not speak to her, at first, of your father's urgency.'

'Most certainly not! Let us both keep it snug. I'm not even fond of such hasty measures myself generally. We must not startle her. But you think I may speak to her? you will give me the opportunity?'

'Oh, that will not be difficult;' and after expatiating a little on Bell's admirable qualities, and her deep love for her, and her convictions that their characters would accord, to which Captain Bertie gave rather divided attention, she said, 'Of course you will dine here,' and he said he would; and here they came to a pause. She said she believed she must return to her little scholars, and he said he would take a turn before dinner.

Directly the door closed after him, she went to Bell, and said, 'I can relieve you now; Captain Bertie is gone.'

Bell returned to the parlour, and presently Perry came in, all in a glow with running, and said, 'Uncle Peregrine met me, and said I'd better attend to my lessons and be a

good boy; and he has given me five shillings! Isn't he jolly?'

'Decidedly,' said Bell. 'The half-crowns seem to ring very well. I'm sure they are good ones. I don't think you need try them any more. If you put them in your pocket, you will be able to attend to your sum.'

While their heads were close together over the slate, Captain Bertie returned.

'Perry,' said he, 'you'll find my valise at the booking-office; it's not very heavy. Go and fetch it for me, my boy.'

'Yes, uncle. And bring it here?'

'No, take it to the inn. Tell them to put it in the room I had before. Now, don't run for your life.'

'But I shall though,' said Perry, with a knowing nod.

'What! disobey orders? At your peril, sir!'

And Perry, though thinking him in fun, marched off very demurely.

'We must teach that youngster obedience, Miss Frobisher,' said he in a softer voice, and seating himself near her. 'You *have* taught him—you teach him everything that is good. Don't go away; I've a few words to say.'

His few words proved too many to be here repeated; and their effect was to as-

tonish, bewilder, confuse, and touch Bell so much, that she could not refrain from crying. He was wondrously careful not to alarm her —said nothing of an early day—kept his father out of sight altogether, except by saying that he was an old man now, and would be pleased to see him settled; he was sure of his consent and approval.

Bell's head was in such a whirl, and her heart beating so fast, that she knew not how to arrange her words as she could wish. She said she wished Biddy were here. She did not like speaking on so important a matter without the knowledge of her elder sister; but she did not doubt her approval; her good opinion of Captain Bertie was already secured. She believed there was no reason to think—

'It is your approval, not hers, that I want,' said Captain Bertie.

Her quick, smiling look, so quickly and shyly withdrawn, told him he was assured of it; and after this they had a long, delightful talk, that seemed to throw quite a different hue on their present and future lives, and on things in general.

Perry broke the spell by rushing in to say, 'Bell, it 's past dinner-time.'

So Bell ran away to dress, and Captain Bertie went out to think what a happy fellow he was, on the sea-shore.

Perry could not make out what was in the air at dinner-time. He felt that something was different, but could not conceive what it was, and looked from his mother to Bell, and from Bell to his uncle, with such an air of perplexity, that they were much amused.

After dinner, Mrs. Bertie sent them all out to walk on the sands, and to Perry's great joy they went a mile or more beyond the longest walk he had ever yet taken, and then found a capital seat on the shingle, where they could watch the tide coming in. Here Perry alternately sat beside them, looking from one to the other, and ran down to look for shells, Captain Bertie telling him that he particularly wished for the largest cowry to be found on that coast.

'What do you think of this coast?' said Bell presently.

'That is such a vague question,' returned he, laughing. 'If you mean, what do I think of it as respects the eye, I think it very tame, compared with others I have seen, though there are pretty little bits here and there. If

you mean, what do I think of it professionally, as a sailor, I know nothing of it at all. I know nothing of the soundings, the reefs, the currents, the shifting sands, the sunken rocks. Strictly speaking, I know nothing of it whatever.'

'Yet you have known it as long as you have known me,' said Bell simply.

He looked at her with quickness, and then said, 'Oh, is that your drift? Why, you are as easily read as large print.'

'Don't be too sure of that,' said Bell, 'and, at any rate, I may not find it as easy to read *you*.'

He made no answer to the last, but, looking at her earnestly, said, 'Why should I not be too sure of it?'

'For the very reason you gave about the coast,' said Bell. 'You see what it is, but do not know what it has been, or may be. Those cliffs, which you call tame, have been much higher than they are now, even in my memory. That gentle swell which now drowsily rocks a few fishing-boats is sometimes increased to a roaring surge.'

'But I don't believe,' returned he, smiling, 'that *you* either rage or roar, let the outward excitement be what it may. You can't shake

my faith in you: I know you by intuition; why won't you let me be happy? Let us enjoy the present moment—

> "Here, resting on our bank of thought;
> And listen, till our soul
> The voices of the waves has caught,—
> The music of their roll."'

It appeared that Captain Bertie had not yet received sailing orders, but was expecting them daily, and as soon as he received them must put to sea.

'They may be sealed orders; they may send me I know not where, nor for how long. Shall you mind the suspense—the separation?'

'I shall mind it very much, but I can bear it. Only think how little we have seen of each other.'

'Yes, and that bright little oasis may be gradually encroached on by clouds of sand, if not buried altogether.'

'What do you mean?'

'I mean that you have so very few memories of me to preserve, that if we are very long apart they may get weakened.'

'Oh, well, if you think so of yourself, you need not think so of me.'

'No; but how much better it would be if

all my little remaining time could be spent with you.'

'Yes, certainly.'

'As your husband, I mean.'

'No, that cannot be.'

'I should like to leave you a right to my name, to my effects, to a home of some sort. I should go away so much happier.'

'It cannot be,' said Bell. 'There is not time. We were nothing to each other yesterday.'

'Oh, how *can* you say so?'

'And we may be very happy and thankful to-day without taking thought for the morrow.'

'Supposing you *were* to come round to what I wish, where should you like our home to be?'

'Why, have you not just said you are under sailing orders? Your home will be your ship. My home will be with my sister.'

'But not in that little cottage. I could not leave my wife there. My means are moderate, but yet I must do something better for her than that.'

'If I had my wish—' began Bell.

'Well, what then? Let me hear.'

'Supposing things were as you were wish-

ing they were, it would be very nice for me to be living in our old house, and Biddy with me.'

'Why should it not be so? Is it in the market?'

'I believe Mr. Craikie wants to dispose of it, but nobody wants to have it.'

'I 'll speak to him this very evening. It would be a pity to let it slip through my fingers.'

Bell could not help looking very much pleased. 'It would be the best plan every way,' said she. 'The rent at present is above our means, but not above yours, and you would have no expense in furnishing, because our old furniture would go into its old place, and we should like it a great deal better than new. Then I should be in my old happy home, and under my sister's protection in your absence, and—'

'Be almost as comfortable as if you had no husband at all,' said Captain Bertie laughing.

'No,' said Bell gravely, 'you know that was not what I meant.'

'Perry, this *is* a very large cowry; perhaps the largest I ever saw. Thank you, my boy, this will do famously. Now we are going home to tea, and to call on Mr. Craikie.'

'Better not mention our names,' said Bell. 'He is not friendly towards us.'

'Uncle knows that,' muttered Perry. 'He called him a scoundrel.'

'Say you are Mrs. Bertie's brother-in-law; that will carry much more weight.'

'Very well, I will. Could not we get the key of the house and go over it, if he seems disposed to treat?'

'Undoubtedly. He would expect any one who thought of taking it to go over it.'

'I'll ask him for the key, then. I should like to see a house where you have been so happy.'

'It will not seem much of a house to you,' said Bell; 'but it was a happy home to us.'

When they reached home, Perry found his mother in the store-closet, and availed himself of the opportunity.

'Mamma,' said he in a confidential undertone, 'I don't know whether I ought to say so, but I think Bell and Uncle Perry like each other very much.'

'I hope they do, Perry, for I like them both.'

'Yes, but'—with very round eyes, and still lower voice—'should you be very much surprised if they were to marry?'

'Well, I think they might do worse. Perhaps they may some of these days.'

'Yes, I think they will; for, as I came up to them on the shingle, I heard the word "husband."'

'You must not make sure of it from a single word, though,' said Mrs. Bertie, laughing. 'Perhaps they will make up their minds about it before Captain Bertie sails, if we give them the opportunity of talking it over.'

'I 'm sure *I* will,' said Perry. 'Only think, if Bell were my aunt! I suppose I must leave off calling her Bell.'

This excellent little boy so well carried out his good intentions, that from this time he never intruded when he was not wanted, or appeared to hear or see anything that was undesired. He hung back from going with them over the old house, till Bell said, 'Come, Perry,' and then he flew to her side.

The old house certainly did not appear to the best advantage—dusty, close, and unfurnished—but Captain Bertie thought it cheap, and Perry gravely ruminated whether, in that case, Mr. Craikie were an absolute scoundrel for having raised the rent.

'You cannot think how much nicer it looked when it was furnished,' said Bell.

'Why should not I see it furnished again?' said Captain Bertie. 'I shall close with him to-day, put in an old woman to scour it down to-morrow, and why should you not put your furniture into it the day after? Then it would be all ready for Miss Frobisher against her return; and what a pleasant surprise it will be!'

Bell shook her head. 'She will have quite enough of a surprise already.'

Perry here began shouting and capering as if out of his wits. 'Ahoy! ahoy! The "Lively Peggy" in the offing!'

Bell turned very red. The 'Lively Peggy' it was, sure enough. From red she turned pale: she was too much agitated for pleasure.

'You will think it very strange,' said she, addressing Captain Bertie painfully, 'but—*would* you mind going away for a little while, till I have seen Biddy?'

'What, may not I see the "Lively Peggy" come into harbour? Are you ashamed of me?' said he, smiling. 'No, no; I see, I feel, I understand it all. Men are in the way sometimes. I'll keep out of the way till to-morrow.'

And he did so, to Bell's very great relief; giving her time to tell Biddy the news in her own way, at her own season. Miss Biddy was very much overcome by it, surprised, and gratified. She had had a successful voyage, and this was the crown of it.

As the friends sat talking everything over that evening,—Perry, on account of his exemplary character, being allowed to sit drawing on his slate all the while, listening to every word,—Miss Biddy could not but express her pleasure at the idea of living again in the old house, with Bell still under the same roof. Mrs. Bertie then took advantage of the opportunity to praise Captain Bertie's extreme delicacy in not having once pressed his father's urgent wish, almost command, to let the marriage take place before the Captain sailed.

'He is such an obedient son—his father is such a strange man, and his approbation is of such great consequence, that he really should have great credit given him for saying nothing to Bell.'

'He did say something,' said Bell, smiling, 'but I would not hear him.'

The elder ladies talked it over in a sober, business-like way, but still they went

to bed with the decision that nothing so sudden could in prudence or propriety be done.

But how Captain Bertie talked them round in the morning! Bell much more feared her sister's first impression on him than his on her sister; she was afraid he might think her masculine—not a lady. She took much more pains in setting out Miss Biddy than herself for the morning interview; and the pains were not unsuccessful; for the black silk dress, usually kept for Sundays, and handsome cap from Guernsey, were much more becoming than the beaver hat and cloth coat. Miss Biddy looked what she was: an intelligent, good-humoured, elderly woman. Captain Bertie saw nothing unprepossessing in her when he was presented; and she, on her part, could not fail to be pleased with him. They were first friendly, then cordial, then they fell into easy, sometimes earnest conversation; and when Bell left the room for a few minutes, Captain Bertie so earnestly represented the manifold advantages of Bell's consenting to name an early day, that Miss Biddy agreed to urge it on her. Miss Biddy's approval overcame nearly all Bell's scruples at once; in short,

Captain Bertie carried his point, and thenceforth all was joyous preparation.

Mr. Craikie, who had found Miss Biddy's house a dear bargain to him, was extremely pleased at a tenant dropping, as it were, from the skies, and taking it on his own terms. His face grew longer and darker, indeed, when he found that this eligible party, this fine, distinguished-looking officer of ancient lineage, was going to marry Bell Frobisher —of whom he had prophesied that she would never have another offer—and leave her and Miss Biddy in possession. But solid money is better than empty spite; or, at any rate, than an empty house; so, on the whole, he was not dissatisfied; while all the other inhabitants of Hardsand were thoroughly gratified. Captain Spinks came stumping down on his wooden leg, to Miss Biddy, with his 'Didn't I tell you, mum, that Miss Bell's merits would not be overlooked?' which nobody could recollect his having done. As for Beale, his eyes actually filled with tears, when Perry rushed to him and almost hugged him, exclaiming, 'Oh, Beale! what do you think? Bell Frobisher's going to marry my brave uncle, and they are to live in Miss Biddy's old house! *Isn't* it jolly!'

The moving the furniture back again was quite a festival, and Captain Bertie new furnished Bell's room, which had a couch, and a Davenport, and a book-case, and pretty work-table. She received a kind message from Sir Peregrine, a very kind letter from the Reverend Mr. Bertie, and quite a sermon from Charles; who, after hoping she would be happy, went on with 'And now, my dear friend, let me offer a few words on the duties of the new state to which it has pleased Providence to call you,' etc., etc.—three full pages! And his wedding present was 'The Whole Duty of Woman, in the Nursery, the Kitchen, and the Closet; to which are added a few useful recipes and prescriptions, with a dinner for two persons for every day in the year.'

Bell could not be completely happy without Hetty; and Hetty got leave to be bridesmaid. A pretty bridesmaid she was, everybody thought; and though the wedding was a very quiet, simple one, and they all walked to church except Bell, every one in Hardsand was present, and it was afterwards decided unanimously that everything was just what should be. Miss Biddy, in her white bonnet, looked glorious, Perry thought,

and Beale also. 'They may say what they will of the young ladies, of course we all knows they're 'ansome; but if you want a real fine woman, there's no one will beat our cap'n.' Of course, every blue-jacket in the place had his favour, and a stiff glass of grog besides. Miss Biddy had made the favours—a clothes-basket full; and a precious quantity of white ribbon she had put into them. And now

'The bridal is over, the guests are all gone'—

but the bride's eldest sister does not sit weeping alone. She is in her old seat in the bow-window overlooking the quay, and her writing-desk is before her. The 'Lively Peggy' lies motionless alongside the quay; Beale, Perry, and one or two old hands are gossiping beside it; Perry shifts from one foot to another sometimes, and looks in the face of each speaker in turn; they all seem very happy—the bells are still ringing, and people step out briskly as they pass, exchange cheerful words, and wear a holiday look. The vessels in the harbour are dressed with everything in the shape of a flag or pennant that can be mustered, and as for the 'Lively Peggy,' she is positively bedizened with streamers. Captain Spinks sits on the old

white garden-seat, smoking his pipe, and seems as much a feature in the locality as the seat itself. He has never, no, never felt so at home there (he tells Miss Biddy) since she moved out of the house. But to Mr. Craikie he intimates, in many half-sentences, with knowing winks and grimaces, 'The times are out of joint, sir; the good old times, when the free trade *was* a trade, are gone.'

Miss Biddy marks one familiar object after another with complacence. Captain Bertie and Bell are speeding on their way to Steep-hollow, where they are to spend a week. After that, they go to Portsmouth to remain till Captain Bertie embarks, and then Bell will return to Hardsand. Hetty is telling all the details of her daily life to Mrs. Bertie; she seems so happy in it, as to regret that her engagement will soon end. Miss Biddy reviews her sisters' positions with thankfulness; she looks at her ledger, and sees her father's debt still nearer its liquidation, and is thankful for that too. Her only two Latin words rise again to her lips—*Laus Deo.*

At length the day, the happy day, so long anticipated by Miss Biddy, arrived. A few

years had passed since Bell's marriage; Hetty was married too, and settled with Mr. Harper in a pretty parsonage. Perry was on board the 'Atalanta' with his uncle; and Bell had left her pretty house at Portsea to visit her eldest sister. Miss Biddy had made her crowning voyage; the seven hundred pounds was now made up; and, dressed in her best, she was preparing to go round with Bell and Mrs. Bertie and pay all her father's creditors in full. Mr. Craikie was the principal creditor, therefore she went to him first. They had scarcely seen each other for many months, therefore she was struck to see how ill he looked. The world had not latterly gone well with Mr. Craikie; he had narrowly escaped being in the 'Gazette;' therefore it was a surprise of no ordinary pleasure to be paid the four hundred and fifty pounds he had long looked on as a bad debt.

'Really, Miss Frobisher, this is a noble deed; a highly honourable action, ma'am. I wish there were more like you. A noble dedication, really, of the fruits of the industry of years to the memory of a deceased father. Will you take a glass of anything? Madeira? sherry? Mrs. Bertie, let me

offer you something, ma'am—Mrs. Peregrine Bertie?'

Poor Mr. Craikie! Bell had refused his hand and heart, and now his glass of wine was declined with thanks. Availing himself of this genial opportunity, Mr. Craikie told Miss Biddy that he was very willing to sell the house to her on very reasonable terms. Miss Biddy liked the idea of buying it; but she must earn and save a little more first. However, he showed her how it might be easily arranged, and eventually she became its purchaser.

We may now leave Miss Biddy in the peaceful enjoyment of her declining years, living in her own house with her old servant, and occasionally exchanging visits with her sisters. The 'Lively Peggy' is sold; old Beale is superannuated; she visits him daily, and is daily visited by Mrs. Bertie. Perry is now a fine young lieutenant.

The reader of this little narrative may remember a paragraph which appeared in the *Illustrated News* on June 11, 1864. It was to this effect:—

'An old lady, named Miss Betsy Miller, lately died at Glasgow, who in her younger days took a fancy to maritime speculation,

and actually chartered an old brig, and became sailing-master. So successful was her career, that she was enabled to pay off a debt of £700, maintain herself in comfort, and bring up two sisters left dependent on her.'

The career of Miss Biddy Frobisher, then, may be considered founded on fact.

THE END.

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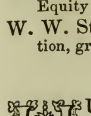

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